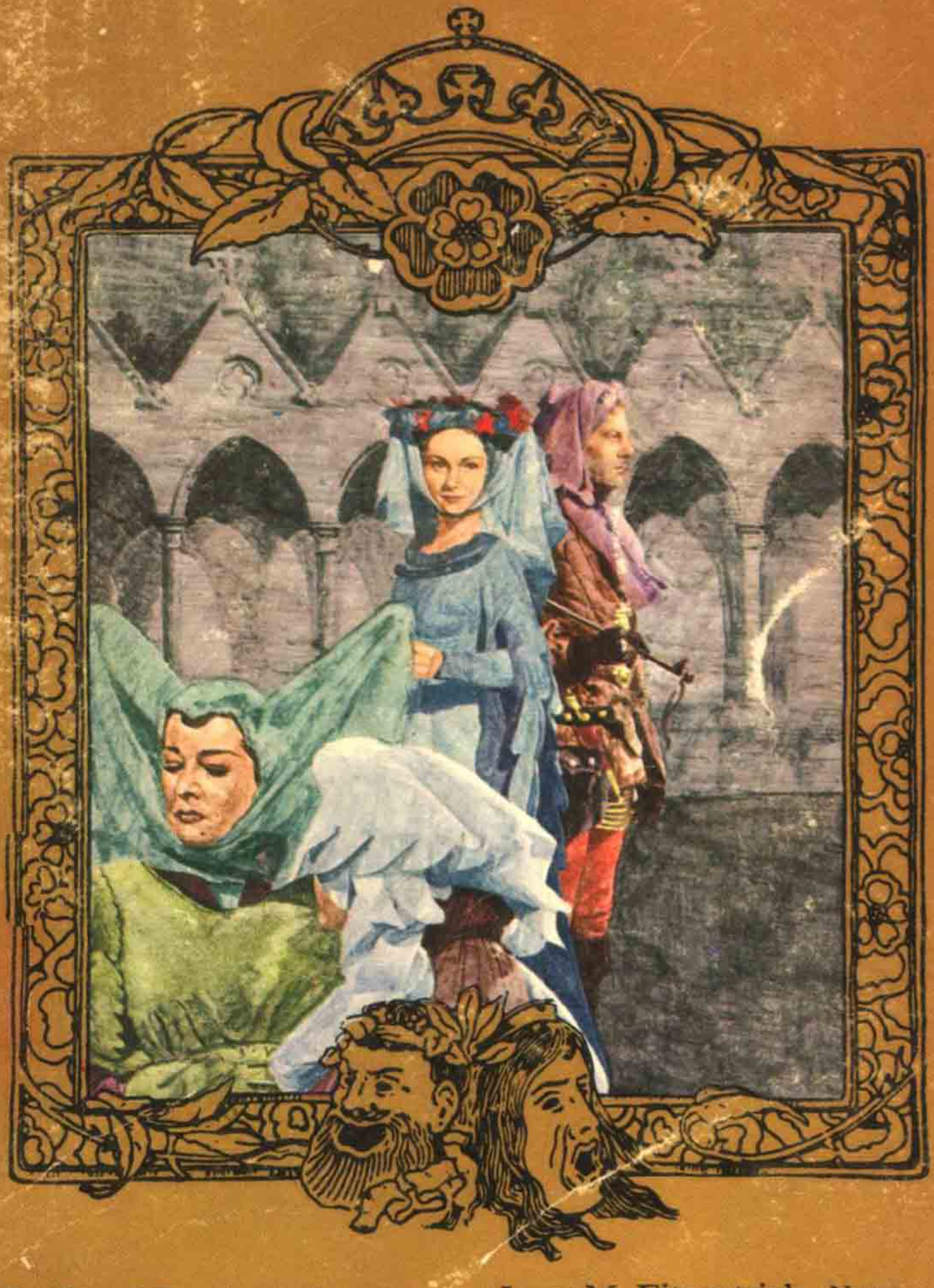
William Shakespeare

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL



Dr. Beryl Rowland, *Introduction* / Lucy M. Fitzpatrick, *Notes*

William Shakespeare

TO THE READER

THIS FIGURE, THAT THOU HERE SEEST PUT,
IT WAS FOR GENTLE SHAKESPEARE CUT;
WHEREIN THE GRAVER HAD A STRIFE
WITH NATURE, TO OUT-DO THE LIFE:
O, COULD HE BUT HAVE DRAWN HIS WIT
AS WELL IN BRASS, AS HE HATH HIT
HIS FACE; THE PRINT WOULD THEN SURPASS
ALL, THAT WAS EVER WRIT IN BRASS.
BUT, SINCE HE CANNOT, READER, LOOK,
NOT ON HIS PICTURE, BUT HIS BOOK.

BEN: JONSON.

The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man and nature. Without denying man's need for Grace, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods," values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now. Man himself was seen no longer as wholly vile and depraved, incapable even of desiring goodness, but rather as Shakespeare saw him in *Hamlet*:

> *"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!*
> *how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how*
> *express and admirable! in action how like an angel!*
> *in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world!*
> *the paragon of animals!"*

It was, indeed, a very stirring time to be alive in. It was a time like spring, when promise, opportunity, challenge, and growth appeared where none had been dreamed of before. Perhaps this is why there is so much poetry of springtime in the age of Shakespeare.

Edited with Introduction and Suggestions for Study by Dr. Beryl Rowland

Notes Edited by Lucy Mabry Fitzpatrick

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ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

By

William Shakespeare

General Introduction by Dr David G Pitt

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare: His Life, Times, and Theatre

HIS LIFE

The world's greatest poet and playwright was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in the year 1564. An entry in the *Stratford Parish Register* gives his baptismal date as April 26. Since children were usually baptized two or three days after birth, it is reasonable to assume that he was born on or about April 23—an appropriate day, being the feast of St. George, the patron saint of England.

His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover and dealer in wool and farm products, who had moved to Stratford from Snitterfield, four miles distant, some time before 1552. During his early years in Stratford his business prospered, enabling him to acquire substantial property and to take his place among the more considerable citizens of the town. In 1557 he married Mary, daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy landowner of Wilmcote, not far from Stratford. Two daughters were born to them before William's birth, but both died in infancy. William was thus their third child, though the eldest of those who survived infancy. After him were born Gilbert, Joan, Anne, Richard, and Edmund.

Very little is positively known about Shakespeare's boyhood and education. We know that for some years after William's birth his father's rise in Stratford society and municipal affairs continued. Many local offices came to him in rapid succession: ale-taster, burgess, assessor of fines, chamberlain, high bailiff, alderman, and chief alderman in 1571. As the son of a man of such eminence in Stratford, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended the local Grammar School. This he was entitled to do free of charge, his father being a town councilor. It is probable that he covered the usual Elizabethan curriculum: an "A B C book," the catechism in Latin and English, Latin grammar, the translation of Latin authors, and perhaps some Greek grammar and translation as well. But family circumstances appear to have curtailed his formal education before it was complete. About the year 1578, having gone heavily into debt, John Shakespeare lost two large farms inherited by his wife from her father. Thereafter, he was involved in a series of lawsuits, and lost his post on the Stratford town council. Matters got steadily worse for him, until finally, in 1586, he was declared a bankrupt.

In 1852, in the midst of his father's legal and financial crises—Shakespeare married Anne, daughter of Richard Hathaway (recently deceased) of the village of Shottery near Stratford. The *Episcopal Register* for the Diocese of Worcester contains their marriage record, dated November 28, 1582; he was then in his eighteenth year, his wife in her twenty-sixth. On May 26 of the following year the

Stratford Parish Register recorded the baptism of their first child, Susanna; and on February 2, 1585, the baptism of a twin son and daughter named Hamnet and Judith.

How Shakespeare supported his family, how long he continued to live in Stratford, we do not know for certain.

But however he may have occupied himself in the interim, we know that by 1592 he was already a budding actor and playwright in London. In that year Robert Greene in his autobiographical pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit*, referring to the young actors and menders of old plays who were, it seemed to him, gaining undeserved glory from the labours of their betters (both by acting their plays and by rewriting them), wrote as follows:

> Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers heart, wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes factotum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shakescene in a countrey.

"Shakescene" is clearly Shakespeare. The phrase "upstart Crow" probably refers to his country origins and his lack of university education. "Beautified with our feathers" probably means that he uses the older playwrights' words for his own aggrandisement either in plays in which he acts or in those he writes himself. "Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde" is a parody of a line in III *Henry VI*, one of the earliest plays ascribed to Shakespeare. And the Latin phrase *Johannes factotum*, meaning Jack-of-all-trades, suggests that he was at this time engaged in all sorts of theatrical jobs: actor, poet, playwright, and perhaps manager as well.

Greene died shortly after making this scurrilous attack on the young upstart from Stratford, and so escaped the resentment of those he had insulted. But Henry Chettle, himself a minor dramatist, who had prepared Greene's manuscript for the printer, in his *Kind-Harts Dreame* (1592), apologized to Shakespeare for his share in the offence:

> I am as sory as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because my selfe have seene his demeanor no lesse civill, than he excelent in the qualitie he professes: Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approoves his Art.

Thus, in a very indirect manner and because of an attack upon him by an irascible dying man, we learn that Shakespeare at this time was in fact held in high regard by "divers of worship," that is, by many of high birth, as an upright, honest young man of pleasant manners and manifest skill as actor, poet, and playwright.

Although Shakespeare by 1593 had written, or written parts of, some five or six plays, it was as a non-dramatic poet that he first appeared in print. *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, long narrative poems, both bearing Shakespeare's name, were published in 1593 and 1594 respectively. But thereafter for the next twenty years he wrote almost nothing but drama. Long before his death in 1616,

his name held such magic for the public that merely to print it on the title page of any play assured its popular acclaim. The "upstart Crow" had come a long way since 1592.

He had come a long way, too, from the economic straits that may well have driven him to London many years before. We know, for example, from the records of tax assessments that by 1596 Shakespeare was already fairly well-to-do. But his life during this time was not quite unclouded. His only son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of eleven years, his father in 1601, and his mother in 1608. All three were buried in Stratford. More happily he saw, in 1607, the marriage of his daughter Susanna to Dr. John Hall, an eminent physician of Stratford, and, in the following year, the baptism of his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall.

Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford appears to have been gradual, but by 1613, if not earlier, he seems to have settled there, though he still went up to London occasionally. On March 25, apparently already ill, Shakespeare revised and signed his will, among other bequests leaving to his wife his "second best bed with the furniture." A month later he was dead, dying on his fifty-second birthday, April 23, 1616. He was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, on April 26.

HIS TIMES

Shakespeare lived during the English Renaissance, that age of transition that links the Mediaeval and the Modern world. Inheriting the rich traditions of the Middle Ages in art, learning, religion, and politics, rediscovering the great legacies of classical culture, the men of the Renaissance went on to new and magnificent achievements in every phase of human endeavour. No other period in history saw such varied and prolific development and expansion. And the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), Shakespeare's age, was the High Renaissance in England.

During the Middle Ages theology had dominated education, but now the language, literature, and philosophy of the ancient world, the practical arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and training in morals, manners, and gymnastics assumed the major roles in both school and university—in other words, an education that fitted one for life in the world here and now replaced one that looked rather to the life hereafter. Not that the spiritual culture of man was neglected. Indeed, it took on a new significance, for as life in this world acquired new meaning and value, religion assumed new functions, and new vitality to perform them, as the bond between the Creator and a new kind of creation.

It was, of course, the old creation—man and nature—but it was undergoing great changes. The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world, which was also "fallen," as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man, nature, and the things of this life. Without denying man's need

for Grace and the value of the means of salvation provided by the Church, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods," values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now, and that God had given them for man to enjoy.

HIS THEATRE

There were many playhouses in Shakespeare's London. The first was built in 1576 by James Burbage and was called the *Theatre*. It was built like an arena, with a movable platform at one end, and had no seats in the pit, but had benches in the galleries that surrounded it. It was built of wood, and cost about £200. Other famous playhouses of Shakespeare's time included the Curtain, the Bull, the Rose, the Swan, the Fortune, and, most famous of them all, the Globe. It was built in 1599 by the sons of James Burbage, and it was here that most of Shakespeare's plays were performed. Since more is known about the Globe than most of the others, I shall use it as the basis of the brief account that follows of the Elizabethan playhouse.

Open to the sky, somewhat like a modern football or baseball stadium, though much smaller, it had three tiers of galleries surrounding the central "yard" or pit, and a narrow roof over the top gallery. But most interesting from our viewpoint was the stage—or rather *stages*—which was very different from that of most modern theatres. These have the familiar "picture-frame" stage: a raised platform at one end of the auditorium, framed by curtains and footlights, and viewed only from the front like a picture. Shakespeare's stage was very different.

The main stage, or *apron* as it was called, jutted well out into the pit, and did not extend all the way across from side to side. There was an area on either side for patrons to sit or stand in, so that actors performing on the apron could be viewed from three sides instead of one. In addition, there was an inner stage, a narrow rectangular recess let into the wall behind the main stage. When not in use it could be closed by a curtain drawn across in front; when open it could be used for interior scenes, arbor scenes, tomb and anteroom scenes and the like. On either side of this inner stage were doors through which the main stage was entered. Besides the inner and outer stages, there were no fewer than four other areas where the action of the play, or parts of it, might be performed. Immediately above the inner stage, and corresponding to it in size and shape, was another room with its front exposed. This was used for upstairs scenes, or for storage when not otherwise in use. In front of this was a narrow railed gallery, which could be used for balcony scenes, or ones requiring the walls of a castle or the ramparts of a fortress. On either side of it and on the same level was a window-stage, so-called because it consisted of a small balcony enclosed by windows that opened on hinges. This permitted actors to stand inside and speak from the open windows to others on the main stage below.

Very little in the way of scenery and backdrops was used. The dramatist's words and the imagination of the audience supplied the lack of scenery. Usually a few standard stage props were on hand: trestles and boards to form a table, benches and chairs, flagons, an

altar, artificial trees, weapons, a man's severed head, and a few other items. Costumes were usually elaborate, though no attempt was made to reproduce the dress of the time and place portrayed in the play.

Play production in Shakespeare's time was clearly very different from that of ours, but we need have no doubts about the audience's response to what they saw and heard on stage. They came, they saw, and the dramatist conquered, for they kept coming back for more and more. And despite the opposition that the theatre encountered from Puritans and others, who thought it the instrument of Satan, the theatre in Shakespeare's time flourished as one of the supreme glories of a glorious age.

—DAVID G. PITT
Memorial University of Newfoundland

INTRODUCTION
All's Well That Ends Well

DATE AND SOURCE OF THE PLAY

All's Well That Ends Well is about a clever girl who, as a reward for healing the King of an apparently incurable disease, gets herself married to an unwilling and profligate young nobleman. Her new husband refuses to sleep with her until she has conceived a child by him, and his impossible condition is fulfilled when, without his knowledge, she substitutes herself for a young woman whom he intends to seduce.

This improbable tale has its origins in both folktale and myth,—in the story of the Clever Peasant Girl who, after she has passed all the tests at the royal court, marries the man of her choice, and in the ancient motif of the Dying King whose restoration can only be achieved by miraculous means. Its more immediate source was in a collection of tales printed in 1566, William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, where the following synopsis introduces the *novella* proper:

> Giletta a Phisitions daughter of Narbon, healed the French King of a Fistula, for reward whereof she demaunded Beltramo Counte of Rossiglione to husband. The Counte being maried against his will, for despite fled to Florence, and loved another. Giletta his wife, by pollicie founde meanes to lye with her husbande, in place of his lover, and was begotten with childe of two sonnes: which knowen to her husband, he received her againe, and afterwards he lived in great honour and felicitie.

Shakespeare may also have known a French version by Antoine le Maçon, and both Painter and le Maçon followed fairly closely the tale as it appeared in the *Decameron*.

The date of the play is uncertain. Francis Meres in 1598 referred

to a play by Shakespeare entitled *Love's Labours Wonne* and the idea that this was an early working of *All's Well* persisted until this century without any firm evidence to support it. Attempts to date the play on internal historical allusions, borrowings from contemporary works, similarities in mood, theme, action or treatment of characters between it and other plays by Shakespeare, or on the basis of language and metrical patterns have proved inconclusive.

The style of *All's Well* is uneven; the tone hovers uneasily between romance and realism. But these variations may be the result of mood and of irreconcilable interests, and are not necessarily occasioned by various dates of composition. In the latest Arden edition, G. K. Hunter gives a tentative dating of *All's Well* as being 1603–4, largely because of the play's affinities with *Measure for Measure*. The latter is, however, dramatically and stylistically, a far richer and more sophisticated drama. There is no record of a contemporary performance.

THEME, STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERS

In Boccaccio's *Decameron* this tale was one of the stories of the third day, intended to illustrate a set theme: the pursuit of a desired object and its recovery when lost. Translated into drama, it has obvious limitations. The hero's reluctance to be forced into marriage even to such a beautiful girl as Helena might be understandable, but both the condition which the young man imposes on his wife and the means whereby it is fulfilled seem unpalatable.

The problems of moral alignment are enhanced rather than minimized by Shakespeare's alterations. In the source, the man whom the heroine chooses is socially so much her superior that even the King is reluctant to approve. In Shakespeare's version, the King minimizes the importance of any social discrepancy; Bertram's subsequent dishonesty, his callous rejection of the woman whom he thinks he has seduced are new; Bertram's *affaire* seems more reprehensible in that the ring which he barters for his pleasure is not simply an item of value but the very symbol of the honor of his ancient family. Shakespeare also compresses the time of the action, establishes a political relationship between France and Florence to provide motivation for events, and adds several new characters—the countess, her clown Lavache, Lafeu and Parolles.

In the opening scene Shakespeare quickly establishes the basic situation and shows us that the play is concerned with regeneration and love. He tells of a dying king and presents a young girl filled with love-longing. Good, as represented by the healing art and romantic actions of Helena, and by the honor and piety of the countess, Lafeu, the King, and the widow and Diana, is to be opposed to the pride and unscrupulousness of Bertram and the trickery of Parolles.

HELENA

The theme is not developed in a conventional way. Helena quickly establishes her forceful personality, her ability to cope with all kinds of situations and to dissemble. In the first scene in the play we find her tolerating the rogue Parolles and entering into a bawdy conver-

sation on virginity simply because he is a follower of Bertram, and at the conclusion of the first act we learn that her intention to go to court is prompted not by her concern for the sick King, but by her desire to further her marital ambitions. Her affection for Bertram is such that she has even forgotten her father who died but six months previously. With her skill in rhetoric she is able to overcome the reluctance of the King to submit himself to her cure and she is very specific about the bargain which she proposes. In the ensuing argument between the King and Bertram she is silent except to interject too late—when feelings have become enflamed and the King feels that his honor is at stake—that she will not insist on her bargain: "That you are well restor'd, my lord, I'm glad./ Let the rest go."

We begin to feel sympathy for Helena when she acknowledges that she has driven Bertram into the army and when she resolves to steal away herself like a thief in the dark so that he can return. Poignant, too, is the letter which she sends her mother-in-law announcing her intended pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Jacques and implying that she is seeking death.

> I am Saint Jaques' pilgrim, thither gone.
> Ambitious love hath so in me offended
> That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,
> With sainted vow my faults to have amended.
> Write, write, that from the bloody course of war
> My dearest master, your dear son, may hie.
> Bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far
> His name with zealous fervour sanctify.
> His taken labours bid him me forgive;
> I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth
> From courtly friends, with camping foes to live
> Where death and danger dogs the heels of worth.
> He is too good and fair for death and me;
> Whom I myself embrace to set him free.

But, as Samuel Johnson observed, the most famous shrine of Saint Jacques was at Compostella and Florence was "somewhat out of the road." Nevertheless it is at Florence, where her husband is stationed, that Helena next appears, posing as a pilgrim. Here she loses no time in shrewdly quizzing an elderly widow and her attractive daughter, Diana, about Bertram. She displays an extraordinary readiness to suspect her husband of making dishonorable advances:

> Maybe the amorous count solicits her
> In the unlawful purpose?

With customary adroitness she elicits sympathy for Bertram's wronged wife, and the way in which she asks her new companions to identify Bertram and Parolles for her as they pass by shows considerable zest for dissimulation. Her offering of money to the widow and the promise of more to come is in keeping with her knowledgeable handling of affairs. Widow Capilet has already shown herself to be warm-hearted and honest, but Helena still feels that the

quickest way to get cooperation is to buy it. Her role as manipulator of events achieves its climax when she dramatically reappears at court in the final scene. Not only do the King, the countess and Lafeu believe her dead, but they suspect that Bertram has murdered her. Bertram's ready acceptance of her ensures the conventional happy conclusion, but we are reminded of the origins of the plot in that the ending is also a folktale, one in which two riddles are solved: the immediate one posed by Diana: "One that's dead is quick" (referring to Helena who is believed dead but is now with child), and the action-riddle posed earlier by Bertram.

BERTRAM

Samuel Johnson remarked: "I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram. A man noble without generosity and young without truth; who marries Helena as a coward, and leaves her as a profligate: when she is dead by his unkindness, sneaks home to a second marriage, is accused by a woman he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness." But it must be noted that until his encounter with Helena at court, Bertram seems to be an admirable if immature young man. He inspires the affection of others, speaks with propriety and is commendably anxious to involve himself in the excitement of war. When he protests at being chosen as Helena's husband, his initial remonstrance is reasonable.

> My wife, my liege! I shall beseech your highness,
> In such a business give me leave to use
> The help of mine own eyes.

He is justifiably reluctant to marry a woman out of gratitude for her saving the life of his King. His disdain of her breeding, his unawareness of her physical attractions and his reluctant agreement when threatened with royal "revenge and hate" put him in an unfavorable light, certainly, but he is confronted with an abnormal situation, engineered entirely by the persistence and daring of Helena.

There is little evidence to suggest that he is under the evil influence of Parolles, although his friends wish to think so. His attitude towards him at times approaches that of master to clown. It is Bertram's decision to be off to the wars, and in his farewell to Helena he is courteous if firm. He is justifiably unimpressed by her humility; he is patient when confronted with her importuning and is polite enough to show anger only when she is out of earshot. He softens the harshness of his complete rejection of her by sending her a letter instead of expressing his resolution to her directly, and it must be remembered that the terms that he gives are not inspired by any intention on his part to promote an unpalatable stratagem—the "bed-trick": what Bertram is trying to get through to Helena is that he will never live with her. That we are supposed to consider his behavior reprehensible is suggested by the attitude of his mother and of the French lords. We discover, however, in Act V, scene iii, that there were stronger grounds for Bertram's reluctance to marry Helena than those previously given: he was in love with Lafeu's daughter. It is in this same final scene that Bertram reveals

what lust and war have done to him: when he is accused of having Helena's ring, he invents a wretched and palpable lie in a desperate attempt to maintain the proprieties. Thereafter we witness Bertram perjuring himself more and more opprobriously in an effort to extricate himself from a situation which, contrived by his wife, now brings about his complete degradation. Clearly, when he declares Diana to be a tramp, we can have no sympathy for him and his abject acknowledgment of Helena is the relieved reaction of a man who has, in truth, just escaped a death sentence.

Our opinion of Bertram is not enhanced by the company he keeps. Parolles tends to serve as an indication of Bertram's corruption. Robert Grams Hunter in *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (1965) remarks that he has elements of the abstract personification, Vice, and of the evil counsellor in his makeup. But he is not an active tempter: his major involvement serves to point up the contrast between Bertram and himself. When he is the victim of a trick, Parolles reveals that he is willing to betray honor itself. He is, however, aware of his true nature even before the unmasking and the tolerance which Lafeu shows finally towards him is a feeling which we ultimately can share. Bertram's treachery is more flagrant and of his reactions we know less. Penitence is too late and too briefly expressed to be dramatically satisfying.

OTHER CHARACTERS

The King, the countess and the court give depth, background and a sense of propriety to the action. The King has vitality and dignity and we are meant to approve of the exercise of his royal prerogative in Act II, scene iii.

The countess is more solidly drawn. In her conversations with her clown, Lavache, her steward, Reynolds, and with Lafeu, she emerges as the gracious lady in charge of a noble household. Her warmth towards Helena encourages our appreciation of the younger woman. She bears the news of Bertram's defection with fortitude, but at the same time she tries to put some of the blame on Parolles:

> A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness;
> My son corrupts a well-derived nature
> With his inducement.

But while she can speak severely of her son to the two French lords, she is more revealing of the distress which she feels when she talks to her own steward:

> Which of them both
> Is dearest to me I have no skill in sense
> To make distinction. Provide this messenger.
> My heart is heavy and mine age is weak;
> Grief would have tears and sorrow bids me speak.

Understandably, when she believes Helena is dead, she promotes the proposed new match for her son with Lafeu's daughter, and asks the King to view Bertram's unsatisfactory conduct as "natural rebellion done i' th' blade of youth." At the same time she does not

allow her affection to blind her. When Bertram denies that the ring which he now possesses belonged to Helena, she remarks with naturalness and devastating honesty: "Son, on my life,/ I have seen her wear it." She is the first to detect his guilt when Diana accuses him—"He blushes and 'tis hit," and makes this her last speech. During the reversal at the end of the play Helena remarks: "O my dear mother, do I see you living?" but we have no reply.

Equally plausible and lively is the character of Lafeu whom we first encounter addressing the King familiarly and somewhat wittily, using the fable of the fox and the grapes to suggest that the King is foolish to decry the idea of recovery just because he believes that recovery is out of reach. He is appreciative of Helena and he is not long in summing up Parolles' character. We are not surprised to learn from Bertram that "common speech/ Gives him a worthy pass." He tries to comfort the countess and like her is disposed to lay the blame for Bertram's behavior on Parolles. His speech is characteristically rigorous:

> No, no, no, your son was misled with a snipp'd-taffeta fellow there, whose villainous saffron would have made all the unbak'd and doughy youth of a nation in his colour. Your daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanc'd by the king than by that red-tail'd bumble-bee I speak of.

He is also tolerant. Lavache addresses him with rude familiarity but he does not hold it against him, and he is ultimately generous towards Parolles. Consistent with his open integrity, is the outburst which the revelation of Bertram's dishonesty provokes from him. He publicly rejects the young man as a prospective son-in-law:

> I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair, and toll for this.

Characteristically even here he uses figurative language with an element of wit. Appropriate to the subject of the marriage market, he employs words having to do with trade: goods at a fair were often stolen ones but nevertheless Lafeu would prefer them to the present purchase; he would register Bertram in the "toll-book" as being once more for sale. We are again reminded of his honest nature when, on Helena's dramatic reappearance, he remarks that he is near tears. True to form he uses another figure, this time a domestic one, humorously unsuited to the present occasion—"Mine eyes smell onions." His final speech (the last in the play except for the King's) is addressed to Parolles, and shows that for all the latter's inadequacies he finds him entertaining. It also brings together the two worlds, the courtly idealistic world in which Lafeu lives and the sordid world of reality which Parolles represents.

PROBLEMS OF THE PLAY

It is small wonder that critics have been uneasy and at variance with one another over this play. Some have seen the drama as a struggle between Helena and Parolles, the good and the bad angel, for possession of the soul of Bertram. But this interpretation, while not impossible to justify in the case of Helena whose virtues impress

all but Bertram and his boon companion, falls short in the case of Parolles who is worthless and foolish rather than wicked. Bertram's caddish behavior is his own. Other symbolic interpretations have been suggested: the King's fistula is indicative of a diseased world; Helena restores that world to health and fertility even though she has to trick Bertram into performing his necessary function—"the physical regeneration of the dying world of Rousillon." To an Elizabethan audience, believing in the reality of the descent of grace upon a sinning human, the play is concerned with Christian forgiveness. As such, it is structurally and thematically related to *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*: the sin is the failure to trust in love. The rejected woman appears to die; the dénouement of forgiveness comes when she is found to be alive and the man who has wronged her acknowledges his error.

It seems possible that the thematic statement is in the text itself. In Act IV, scene iii, one of the minor characters, the first French lord, makes a philosophic statement which is often quoted:

> The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud if our faults whipp'd them not, and our crimes would despair if they were not cherish'd by our virtues.

Helena's virtues are qualities which Shakespeare holds up for our esteem. She impresses all those who are competent to judge her. To the countess she is as dear as a daughter. To Lafeu, who seems most competent to assess her, she is:

> One that in her sex, her years, her profession,
> Wisdom and constancy, hath amazed me more
> Than I dare blame my weakness.

To the King, as soon as he has talked with her, it seems that

> All that life can rate
> Worth name of life, in thee hath estimate,
> Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage,—all
> That happiness and prime can happy call.

Such qualities must be tested or their owner will become proud. Posed against them are the faults and crimes of Bertram. Both protagonists undergo an ordeal before happiness can be achieved. Helena leaves home and friends, allows herself to be used by Bertram as his mistress and to be thought of as dead. Bertram, too, becomes totally alienated from all sources of power and affection. In Act IV, scene iii, we hear of his mother's angry letter, his estrangement from the King, the death of his wife. His brother officers disapprove of him and his friend Parolles betrays him. These blows to his morale are the external representations of the nadir to which he has sunk. In the last scene he shows the interior psychological corruption which is coexistent. The dénouement illustrates the thesis of the first French lord: Helena, her virtues whipped by Bertram's faults, achieves humility through tribulation; Bertram, confronted by his own evil, is saved from despair through virtuous love.

STYLE

Dramatically, however, we are not satisfied: both characters and conflict offer a less than consistent interpretation. The imbalance is reflected in the language itself. The style of *All's Well* is often labored and contorted; complex ideas refuse to be compressed within the limits of normal syntax and versification; passages of stately rhetoric seem artificial. Such factors support the conclusion that the play was experimental. For a resolution of the problems of structure, theme and technique posed here, we have to look to the last plays.

BERYL ROWLAND M.A. PH.D.
Associate Professor
York University
Toronto

STUDY QUESTIONS

ACT I

1. In the first scene what details are presented which are essential to an understanding of the action of the play?
2. What is the function of the exchange between Parolles and Helena?
3. What is the effect of the frequent emphasis on Bertram's youth and inexperience?
4. How does the kind of imagery which Lafeu uses reveal his character?
5. In what way does Lavache's discussion with the countess parody Helena's subsequent request to the countess, in addition to picking up the previous discussion between Helena and Parolles?
6. Shaw termed the role of the Countess of Rousillon "the most beautiful old woman's part ever written." What evidence do you find in this act to support his contention?
7. What elements in the King's speech indicate that one of the problems with which this play is concerned is with youth and age, old respected values and new untested ones?

ACT II

1. In the opening scene Bertram and Parolles bid farewell to various young nobles going off to the Florentine war. What further indications are given of Bertram's character?
2. What are the arguments which Helena uses in order to persuade the King to let her try her skill?
3. To what extent does the imagery suggest that Helena's healing power is miraculous and God-given?

4. How does the way in which Helena phrases her bargain with the King forestall the very objection which Bertram is to make when she chooses him as her husband?
5. How does Lafeu's opening speech in scene iii illustrate one of the distinctions made in the play? Who are those who embrace the new science and with whom does Lafeu align himself?
6. What ritualistic folk elements do you see in the court scenes in which Helena is involved?
7. The King claims that Bertram should marry Helena because the royal honor is at stake. Is the audience expected to view the matter in the same light?
8. In the exchange between Parolles and Bertram after the match what impressions do we get of both men?
9. What attitude does Parolles consistently adopt towards Helena, and how does his greeting to her in scene iv, "Bless you, my fortunate lady," illustrate that attitude?
10. What indication do we have of Lafeu's reaction to Bertram's and Parolles' conduct?

ACT III

1. What is the effect of Lavache's revelations of his change of taste since he has been to court? How does he imply criticism of the superficialities of courtly behavior?
2. To what extent does the riddling nature of Bertram's letter soften the harshness of its meaning?
3. How are we supposed to interpret both Helena's decision and her letter to the countess?
4. What emphasis is put on the unpleasantness of Parolles by Mariana and Diana, and what appears to be the dramatist's intention here?
5. How are the characters of the widow and Diana readily presented?
6. In the same scene Parolles reveals that he has lost the drum. Since Bertram in Act III, scene iii, swore to follow the drum in exclusion of love, what is the symbolic implication? How does it point to Bertram's transactions with Diana?
7. What is the intention of the sub-plot and what is the meaning of Bertram's function in it?
8. Do Helena's manipulations in the final scene do anything to make the stratagem more palatable?

ACT IV

1. In the first two scenes realism and romance are juxtaposed. In what way are they presented and what light do they throw on the characters of Parolles and Bertram?
2. In the second scene Bertram departs confidently asserting to Diana whom he hopes to seduce: "A heaven on earth I have won by wooing thee." What series of events reviewed by the two French lords point up the irony of his statement?

3. How do the opinions of the two French lords enhance the impression of deterioration in Bertram's character?
4. In the continuation of the sub-plot, Bertram discovers Parolles' true nature and expresses his contempt. What evaluation do we make of Bertram as a result?
5. How harshly are we supposed to judge Parolles? Is he primarily a comic character, a hanger-on, conscious of his own inadequacy, or is he an evil tempter who corrupts Bertram?
6. In the fourth scene Helena refers to the title of the play. What is her interpretation of its meaning?
7. What are the implications of the images which Lafeu uses to describe Parolles to the countess?
8. What is the dramatic function of the exchange between the clown, the countess and Lafeu?

ACT V

1. How does the first scene enhance the suspense and also look forward to the dénouement?
2. How do the actions in the second scene provide an ironic counterpart to the first?
3. How is the audience expected to view the quiet opening of the final scene, with Bertram's acceptance of the King's pardon and the arrangements for a second marriage?
4. How do the reactions of the King, the countess and Lafeu to the discovery of Helena's ring in the possession of Bertram give credibility to the contrived situation?
5. What is the dramatic intention behind the further denigration of Bertram? Does his baseness make Helena's love all the more admirable?
6. To what extent does Shakespeare succeed in giving the play a happy ending?

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING OF FRANCE.

DUKE OF FLORENCE.

BERTRAM, *Count of Rousillon.*

LAFEU, *an old lord.*

PAROLLES, *a follower of Bertram.*

Several young French LORDS, *who serve with Bertram in the Florentine war.*

STEWARD,
LAVACHE, *a Clown,* } *servants to the Countess of Rousillon.*

A PAGE.

COUNTESS OF ROUSILLON, *mother to Bertram.*

HELENA, *a gentlewoman protected by the Countess.*

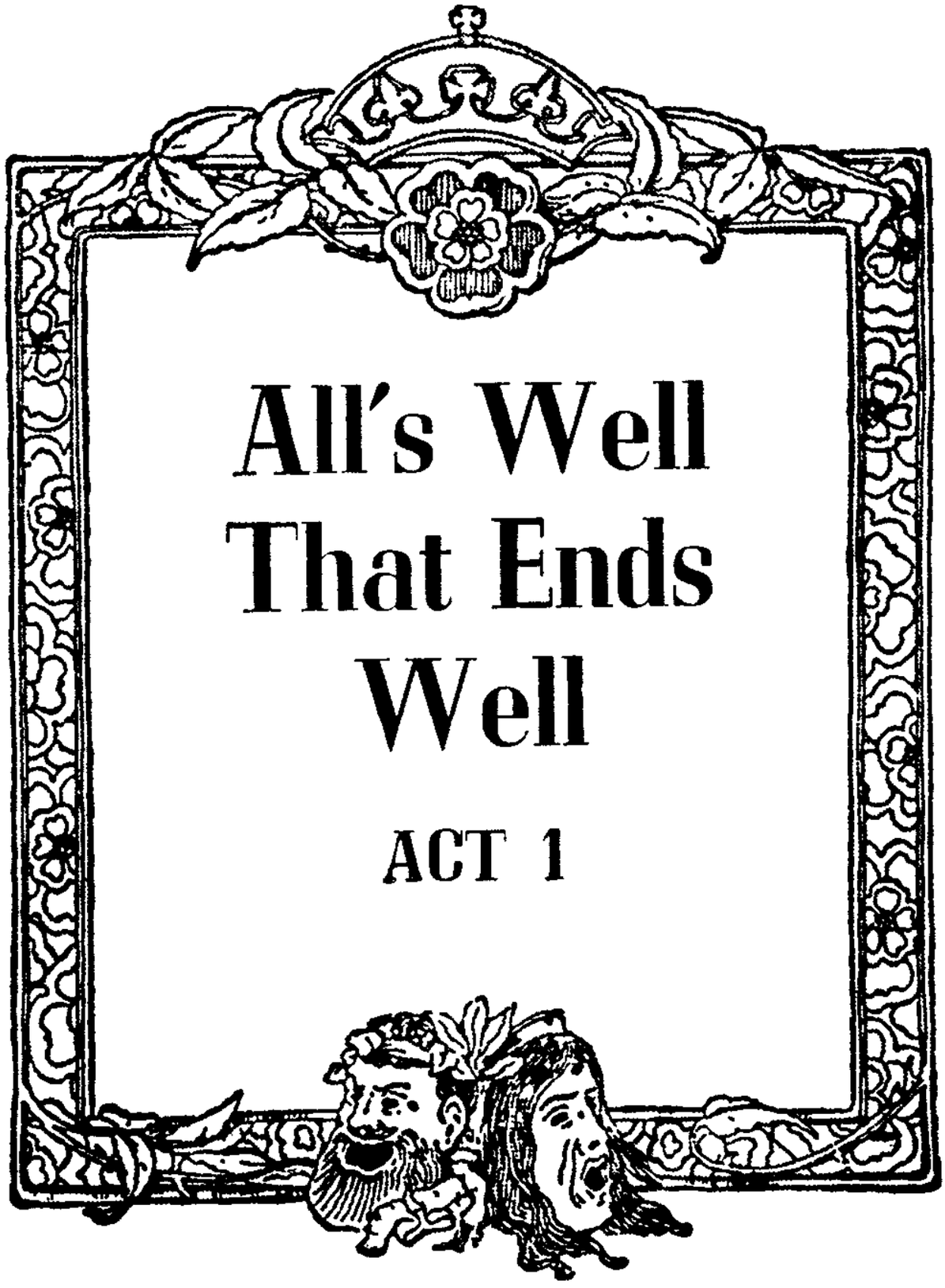
A WIDOW *of Florence.*

DIANA, *her daughter.*

VIOLENTA,
MARIANA, } *neighbours and friends to the Widow.*

LORDS ATTENDING ON THE KING; OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, *&c.*, FRENCH AND FLORENTINE.

SCENE—*Rousillon; Paris; Florence; Marseilles.*



All's Well That Ends Well

ACT 1

ACT I

BERTRAM, the young Count of Rousillon, departs from his widowed mother's palace to go to the court of the King of France whose ward he is. The King, according to an elderly noble, Lafeu, is suffering from an incurable disease. Bertram leaves behind him his mother and her ward, Helena, the young daughter of a famous physician now dead. Helena is in love with Bertram but considers herself socially too far below him to think of marriage. Nevertheless, after an apparently lighthearted discussion with Parolles, "a very tainted fellow" who is Bertram's companion, she resolves to go to court in pursuit of her love. While Bertram is being cordially received by the King she reveals her feelings for Bertram to the countess and tells of her plan: she has a prescription left her by her father which she believes will cure the King. She will go to Paris to treat the King and at the same time be near Bertram.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Rousillon. A hall in the house of the COUNTESS.

Enter BERTRAM, *the* COUNTESS OF ROUSILLON, HELENA, *and* LAFEU, *all in black.*

COUNTESS.

In delivering my son from me, I bury a second husband.

BERTRAM.

And I, in going, madam, weep o'er my father's death anew; but I must attend his majesty's command, to whom I am now in ward,[1] evermore in subjection.

LAFEU.

You shall find of[2] the king a husband, madam;—you, sir, a father: he that so generally is at all times good, must of necessity hold[3] his virtue to you; whose worthiness would stir it up where it wanted, rather than lack it where there is such abundance.[4]

COUNTESS.

What hope is there of his majesty's amendment?[5]

LAFEU.

He hath abandon'd his physicians, madam; under whose practices he hath persecuted time with hope;[6] and finds no other advantage in the process but only the losing of hope by time.

COUNTESS.

This young gentlewoman had a father,—O, that 'had'! how sad a passage 'tis!—whose skill was almost as great as his honesty;[7] had it stretcht so far, would have made nature im-

---

[1] **in ward:** under the feudal laws of England and Normandy, the heirs of great fortunes were the king's wards until they came of age; Shakespeare has extended this practice to the whole of France. [2] **of:** in. [3] **hold:** maintain. [4] **whose worthiness . . . abundance:** your merit would cause kind treatment from one who is not good; therefore, you are not apt to receive anything but kind treatment from a man who is good to everyone. [5] **amendment:** recovery. [6] **persecuted time with hope:** made the days seem long and painful with medical treatments that offered hope of recovery. [7] **honesty:** honor.

mortal, and death should have play for lack[1] of work. Would, for the king's sake, he were living! I think it would be the death of the king's disease.

LAFEU.

How call'd you the man you speak of, madam?

COUNTESS.

He was famous, sir, in his profession, and it was his great right to be so,—Gerard de Narbon.

LAFEU.

He was excellent indeed, madam: the king very lately spoke of him admiringly and mourningly: he was skilful enough to have lived still,[2] if knowledge could be set up against mortality.

BERTRAM.

What is it, my good lord, the king languishes of?

LAFEU.

A fistula,[3] my lord.

BERTRAM.

I heard not of it before.

LAFEU.

I would it were not notorious.[4]—Was this gentlewoman the daughter of Gerard de Narbon?

COUNTESS.

His sole child, my lord; and bequeath'd to my overlooking.[5] I have those hopes of[6] her good that her education promises: her dispositions[7] she inherits, which makes fair gifts fairer; for where an unclean mind carries virtuous qualities,[8] there commendations go with pity,—they are virtues and traitors too: in her they are the better for their simpleness;[9] she derives[10] her honesty,[11] and achieves her goodness.[12]

---

[1] **lack:** want. [2] **still:** always. [3] **fistula:** abscess or ulcer. [4] **notorious:** well-known. [5] **overlooking:** guardianship. [6] **of:** for. [7] **dispositions:** natural attributes. [8] **virtuous qualities:** accomplishments which are the results of education and breeding. [9] **simpleness:** simple goodness; purity. [10] **derives:** inherits. [11] **honesty:** honorable estate. [12] **goodness:** inclination for the good.

LAFEU.

Your commendations, madam, get from her tears.

COUNTESS.

'Tis the best brine a maiden can season[1] her praise in. The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all livelihood[2] from her cheek.—No more of this, Helena,—go to,[3] no more; lest it be rather thought you affect[4] a sorrow than to have—

HELENA.

I do affect a sorrow, indeed; but I have it too.[5]

LAFEU.

Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead; excessive grief the enemy of the living.

COUNTESS.

If the living be enemy to the grief, the excess makes it soon mortal.[6]

LAFEU.

How understand we that?

BERTRAM.

Madam, I desire your holy wishes.

COUNTESS.

Be thou blest, Bertram! and succeed thy father
In manners, as in shape! thy blood[7] and virtue
Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness
Share with thy birthright! Love all, trust a few,
Do wrong to none; be able for thine enemy
Rather in power than use, and keep thy friend
Under thy own life's key;[8] be checkt[9] for silence,
But never taxt[10] for speech. What heaven more will,
That thee may furnish, and my prayers pluck down,
Fall on thy head!—Farewell, my lord:

---

[1] **season:** preserve. [2] **livelihood:** liveliness; animation. [3] **go to;** stop. [4] **affect:** assume. [5] **I do . . . too:** Helena is "affecting" grief for her father, when in reality her grief is for Bertram. [6] **If the living . . . mortal:** "If the living do not indulge grief, grief destroys itself by its own excess"—*Johnson*. [7] **blood:** noble birth. [8] **Under . . . key:** as you would guard your own life. [9] **checkt:** rebuked. [10] **taxt:** also rebuked.

'Tis an unseason'd [1] courtier; good my lord,
Advise him.

LAFEU.

He cannot want the best
That shall attend his love.

COUNTESS.

Heaven bless him!—Farewell, Bertram. [*Exit.*

BERTRAM [*to* HELENA].

The best wishes that can be forged in your thoughts be servants to you! Be comfortable[2] to my mother, your mistress, and make much of her.

LAFEU.

Farewell, pretty lady: you must hold the credit of your father.[3] [*Exeunt* BERTRAM *and* LAFEU.

HELENA.

O, were that all! I think not on my father;
And these great tears grace his remembrance more
Than those I shed for him. What was he like?
I have forgot him: my imagination
Carries no favour[4] in't but Bertram's.
I am undone:[5] there is no living, none,
If Bertram be away. 'Twere all one
That[6] I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me:
In his bright radiance and collateral [7] light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
The ambition in my love thus plagues itself:
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love. 'Twas pretty, though a plague,
To see him every hour; to sit and draw
His arched brows, his hawking[8] eye, his curls,
In our heart's table,[9]—heart too capable
Of [10] every line and trick of his sweet favour:[11]

---

[1] **unseason'd:** immature; inexperienced. [2] **comfortable:** a source of comfort. [3] **you . . . father:** you must uphold (in your person) the reputation of your father. [4] **favour:** face; likeness. [5] **undone:** ruined. [6] **'Twere all one/That:** that is, it is the same thing as if. [7] **collateral:** indirect. [8] **hawking:** hawklike; keen. [9] **table:** tablet. [10] **capable/Of:** susceptible or sensitive to. [11] **sweet favour:** dear face.

But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his reliques.[1]—Who comes here?
One that goes with him: I love him for his sake;
And yet I know him a notorious liar,
Think him a great way fool,[2] solely[3] a coward;
Yet these fixt evils sit so fit in him,
That they take place, when virtue's steely bones[4]
Look bleak i'th'cold wind:[5] withal, full oft we see
Cold[6] wisdom waiting on superfluous[7] folly.

Enter PAROLLES.

PAROLLES.

Save you,[8] fair queen!

HELENA.

And you, monarch!

PAROLLES.

No.

HELENA.

And no.

PAROLLES.

Are you meditating on virginity?

HELENA.

Ay. You have some stain[9] of soldier in you: let me ask you a question. Man is enemy to virginity; how may we barricado[10] it against him?

PAROLLES.

Keep him out.

HELENA.

But he assails; and our virginity, though valiant in the defence, yet is weak: unfold to us some warlike resistance.

PAROLLES.

There is none: man, sitting down before[11] you, will undermine you, and blow you up.

---

[1] **his reliques:** my memories of him. [2] **a great way fool:** largely a fool. [3] **solely:** altogether. [4] **virtue's steely bones:** the uncompromising virtues. [5] **Look bleak i'th'cold wind:** are left out in the cold. [6] **Cold:** naked. [7] **superfluous:** overdressed. [8] **Save:** God save you. [9] **stain:** trace; suggestion. [10] **barricado:** barricade; guard. [11] **sitting down before:** besieging.

HELENA.

Bless our poor virginity from underminers and blowers-up!—
Is there no military policy, how virgins might blow up men?

PAROLLES.

Virginity being blown down, man will quicklier be blown up: marry, in blowing him down again, with the breach yourselves made, you lose your city.[1] It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is rational increase; and there was never virgin got[2] till virginity was first lost. That[3] you were made of, is metal to make virgins. Virginity, by being once lost, may be ten times found;[4] by being ever kept, it is ever lost: 'tis too cold a companion; away with't!

HELENA.

I will stand for't[5] a little, though therefore I die a virgin.

PAROLLES.

There's little can be said in't; 'tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity, is to accuse your mothers; which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin: virginity murders itself; and should be buried in highways, out of all sanctified limit,[6] as a desperate offendress against nature. Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese; consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his[7] own stomach. Besides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon.[8] Keep it not; you cannot choose but[9] lose by't: out with't! within ten year it will make itself ten, which is a

---

[1] **city:** virginity. [2] **got:** begot. [3] **That:** that which. [4] **may be ten times found:** that is, ten more virgins may be the result of a loss of virginity (with a quibble on the 10% permitted in investments). [5] **stand for't:** defend it. [6] **out of all sanctified limit:** that is, in unsanctified ground. [7] **his:** its. [8] **inhibited sin in the canon:** prohibited sin in the Scriptures. [9] **choose but:** fail to.

goodly increase; and the principal itself not much the worse: away with't!

HELENA.

How might one do, sir, to lose it to her own liking?

PAROLLES.

Let me see: marry, ill, to like him that ne'er it likes. 'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the less worth:[1] off with't while 'tis vendible;[2] answer the time of request. Virginity, like an old courtier, wears her cap out of fashion; richly suited, but unsuitable: just like the brooch and the toothpick, which wear not[3] now. Your date[4] is better in your pie and your porridge than in your cheek: and your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French wither'd pears,—it looks ill, it eats dryly; marry,[5] 'tis a wither'd pear; it was formerly better; marry, yet, 'tis a wither'd pear: will you any thing with it?

HELENA.

Not my virginity yet. . . .
There[7] shall your master have a thousand loves,
A mother, and a mistress, and a friend,
A phœnix,[8] captain, and an enemy,
A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,
A counsellor, a traitress, and a dear;
His humble ambition, proud humility,
His jarring concord, and his discord dulcet,
His faith, his sweet disaster; with a world
Of pretty, fond,[9] adoptious christendoms,[10]
That blinking Cupid gossips.[11] Now shall he—
I know not what he shall:—God send him well!—
The court's a learning-place;—and he is one—

---

[1] **'Tis . . . worth:** like merchandise, it (virginity) deteriorates with keeping. [2] **vendible:** marketable. [3] **wear not:** are not fashionable. [4] **date:** a quibble on date (age) and a candied fruit used in pies. [5] **marry:** in truth. [6] **Not my virginity yet:** that is, my virginity is not yet "a withered pear." [7] **There:** at court. [8] **phœnix:** rare bird. [9] **fond:** foolish. [10] **adoptious christendoms:** adopted Christian names; nicknames. [11] **blinking Cupid gossips:** blind Cupid sponsors.

PAROLLES.

What one, i'faith?

HELENA.

That I wish well.—'Tis pity—

PAROLLES.

What's pity?

HELENA.

That wishing well had not a body in't,
Which might be felt; that we, the poorer born,
Whose baser stars[1] do shut us up in wishes,[2]
Might with effects of them[3] follow our friends,
And show what we alone must think;[4] which never
Returns us thanks.

Enter a PAGE.

PAGE.

Monsieur Parolles, my lord calls for you. [*Exit.*

PAROLLES.

Little Helen, farewell: if I can remember thee, I will think of thee at court.

HELENA.

Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a charitable star.

PAROLLES.

Under Mars,[5] I.

HELENA.

I especially think, under Mars.

PAROLLES.

Why under Mars?

HELENA.

The wars have so kept you under,[6] that you must needs be born under Mars.

PAROLLES.

When he was predominant.[7]

---

[1] **baser stars:** that is, the inferior stars under which we are born. [2] **do shut . . . wishes:** prevent us from obtaining our desires. [3] **effects of them:** the carrying out of them (our wishes). [4] **alone must think:** can only think. [5] **Mars:** god of war. [6] **under:** under their domination. [7] **predominant:** in the ascendant.

HELENA.

When he was retrograde,[1] I think, rather.

PAROLLES.

Why think you so?

HELENA.

You go so much backward when you fight.

PAROLLES.

That's for advantage.

HELENA.

So is running away, when fear proposes the safety: but the composition,[2] that your valour and fear makes in you, is a virtue of a good wing,[3] and I like the wear well.[4]

PAROLLES.

I am so full of businesses, I cannot answer thee acutely.[5] I will return perfect courtier; in the which, my instruction shall serve to naturalize thee,[6] so thou wilt be capable of[7] a courtier's counsel, and understand what advice shall thrust upon thee; else thou diest in thine unthankfulness, and thine ignorance makes thee away:[8] farewell. When thou hast leisure,[9] say thy prayers; when thou hast none, remember thy friends:[10] get thee a good husband, and use him as he uses thee: so, farewell. [*Exit.*

HELENA.

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven: the fated sky
Gives us free scope; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
What power is it which mounts my love so high;
That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye?
The mightiest space in fortune nature brings

---

[1] **retrograde:** moving backward (as a planet). [2] **composition:** make-up of your character. [3] **a good wing:** strong flight (with a reference to the flaps, or wings worn on Parolles' shoulders). [4] **I like the wear well:** I like the way you wear them. [5] **acutely:** to the point. [6] **naturalize thee:** familiarize you; make you feel at home. [7] **capable of:** able to understand. [8] **makes thee away:** does away with you; kills you. [9] **leisure:** an opportunity. [10] **When thou hast none . . . friends:** that is, do not think of them at all.

To join like likes and kiss like native things.[1]
Impossible be strange attempts[2] to those
That weigh their pains in sense;[3] and do suppose
What hath not been can't be: who ever strove
To show her merit, that did miss her love?
The king's disease,—my project may deceive me,
But my intents are fixt, and will not leave me. [*Exit.*

Scene II.

Paris. A room in the KING'S *palace.*

Flourish of cornets. Enter the KING OF FRANCE *with letters, and divers* ATTENDANTS.

KING.

The Florentines and Senoys[4] are by th' ears;[5]
Have fought with equal fortune, and continue
A braving[6] war.

FIRST LORD.

So 'tis reported, sir.

KING.

Nay, 'tis most credible; we here receive it
A certainty, voucht from our cousin[7] Austria,
With caution, that the Florentine will move us[8]
For speedy aid; wherein our dearest friend [9]
Prejudicates[10] the business, and would seem
To have us make denial.

FIRST LORD.

His love and wisdom,
Approved so to your majesty, may plead
For amplest credence.

KING.

He hath arm'd [11] our answer,
And Florence is denied before he comes:

---

[1] **The mightiest space . . . things:** that is, Nature brings together those that are furthest apart in birth and makes them kiss like things born to be together. [2] **strange attempts:** unusual undertakings. [3] **weigh their pains in sense:** stop to consider (weigh) the difficulties involved. [4] **Senoys:** natives of Siena. [5] **by th' ears:** quarreling with one another. [6] **braving:** defiant. [7] **cousin:** fellow sovereign. [8] **move us:** appeal to us. [9] **our dearest friend:** i.e., Austria. [10] **Prejudicates:** prejudices. [11] **arm'd:** supported; protected.

Yet, for our gentlemen that mean to see
The Tuscan service, freely have they leave
To stand on either part.[1]

SECOND LORD.

It well may serve
A nursery to our gentry,[2] who are sick
For breathing[3] and exploit.

KING.

What's[4] he comes here?

Enter BERTRAM, LAFEU, *and* PAROLLES.

FIRST LORD.

It is the Count Rousillon, my good lord,
Young Bertram.

KING.

Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face;
Frank[5] nature, rather curious[6] than in haste,
Hath well composed thee. Thy father's moral parts
Mayst thou inherit too! Welcome to Paris.

BERTRAM.

My thanks and duty are your majesty's.

KING.

I would I had that corporal soundness now
As when thy father and myself in friendship
First tried our soldiership! He did look far
Into the service of the time, and was
Discipled of[7] the bravest: he lasted long;
But on us both did haggish[8] age steal on,
And wore us out of act.[9] It much repairs me[10]
To talk of your good father. In his youth
He had the wit, which I can well observe
To-day in our young lords;[11] *but they may jest,*
Till their own scorn return to them unnoted,

---

[1] **part:** side. [2] **gentry:** gentlemen; nobility. [3] **breathing:** exercise; action. [4] **What's:** who is. [5] **Frank:** generous. [6] **curious:** careful. [7] **Discipled of:** followed by. [8] **haggish:** wrinkled and ugly (like a hag). [9] **wore us out of act:** disabled us for action. [10] **much repairs me:** does me good. [11] **In his youth . . . lords:** when he was young he had the same wit as *I see in our young lords* of today.

Ere they can hide their levity in honour[1]
So like a courtier: contempt nor bitterness[2]
Were in his pride, or sharpness; if they were,
His equal had awaked them; and his honour,
Clock to itself,[3] knew the true minute when
Exception bid him speak, and at this time
His tongue obey'd his hand:[4] who were below him
He used as creatures of another place;[5]
And bow'd his eminent top to their low ranks,
Making them proud of his humility,
In their poor praise he humbled.[6] Such a man
Might be a copy[7] to these younger times;
Which, follow'd well, would demonstrate them now
But goers backward.

BERTRAM.

His good remembrance, sir,
Lies richer in your thoughts than on his tomb;
So in approof lives not his epitaph
As in your royal speech.

KING.

Would I were with him! He would always say,—
Methinks I hear him now; his plausive[8] words
He scatter'd not in ears, but grafted them,
To grow there, and to bear,—'Let me not live,'—
Thus his good melancholy[9] oft began,
On the catastrophe and heel of pastime,
When it was out,—'Let me not live,' quoth he,
'After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff
Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses
All but new things disdain; whose judgements are
Mere fathers of their garments; whose constancies
Expire before their fashions:'—this he wisht:

---

[1] **but they . . . honour:** they make themselves objects of ridicule without knowing it. [2] **contempt nor bitterness:** neither contempt nor bitterness. [3] **Clock to itself:** acting as its own watchman. [4] **His tongue obey'd his hand:** the clock image is continued; "the *tongue* of the clock speaks the hour to which the hand points"—H. N. Hudson. [5] **of another place:** not below him in rank. [6] **he humbled:** he humbled himself. [7] **copy:** pattern. [8] **plausive:** pleasing; worthy of being applauded. [9] **melancholy:** philosophy.

I, after him, do after him wish too,
Since I nor[1] wax nor honey can bring home,
I quickly were dissolved from my hive,
To give some labourer room.

SECOND LORD.

You are loved, sir;
They that least lend it you[2] shall lack you first.

KING.

I fill a place, I know't.—How long is't, count,
Since the physician at your father's died?
He was much famed.

BERTRAM.

Some six months since, my lord.

KING.

If he were living, I would try him yet;—
Lend me an arm;—the rest have worn me out
With several[3] applications:—nature and sickness
Debate it[4] at their leisure. Welcome, count;
My son's no dearer.

BERTRAM.

Thank your majesty. [*Exeunt. Flourish.*

SCENE III.

Rousillon. A room in the house of the COUNTESS.

Enter COUNTESS, STEWARD, *and* CLOWN.

COUNTESS.

I will now hear: what say you of this gentlewoman?

STEWARD.

Madam, the care I have had to even your content,[5] I wish might be found in the calendar[6] of my past endeavours; for

---

[1] **nor:** neither.
[2] **lend it you:** give you their love.
[3] **several:** separate (on the part of each doctor).
[4] **Debate it:** strive for mastery.
[5] **even your content:** please you.
[6] **calendar:** record.

then we wound our modesty, and make foul the clearness[1] of our deservings, when of ourselves we publish them.

COUNTESS.

What does this knave here? Get you gone, sirrah: the complaints I have heard of you I do not all believe: 'tis my slowness that I do not; for I know you lack not folly to commit them, and have ability enough to make such knaveries yours.

CLOWN.

'Tis not unknown to you, madam, I am a poor fellow.

COUNTESS.

Well, sir.

CLOWN.

No, madam, 'tis not so well that I am poor; though many of the rich are damn'd: but, if I may have your ladyship's good-will to go to the world, Isbel your woman and I will do as we may.

COUNTESS.

Wilt thou needs be a beggar?

CLOWN.

I do beg your good-will in this case.

COUNTESS.

In what case?

CLOWN.

In Isbel's case and mine own. Service is no heritage:[2] and I think I shall never have the blessing of God till I have issue o' my body; for they say barns[3] are blessings.

COUNTESS.

Tell me thy reason why thou wilt marry.

---

[1] **clearness:** purity.
[2] **heritage:** inheritance.
[3] **barns:** bairns; children.

CLOWN.

My poor body, madam, requires it: I am driven on by the flesh; and he must needs go that the devil drives.

COUNTESS.

Is this all your worship's reason?

CLOWN.

Faith, madam, I have other holy reasons, such as they are.

COUNTESS.

May the world know them?

CLOWN.

I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as you and all flesh and blood are; and, indeed, I do marry that I may repent.[1]

COUNTESS.

Thy marriage,—sooner than thy wickedness.

CLOWN.

I am out o' friends, madam; and I hope to have friends for my wife's sake.

COUNTESS.

Such friends are thine enemies, knave.

CLOWN.

Y'are shallow,[2] madam; e'en great friends; for the knaves come to do that for me, which I am a-weary of. He that ears[3] my land spares my team, and gives me leave to in the crop;[4] if I be his cuckold,[5] he's my drudge: he that comforts my wife is the cherisher of my flesh and blood; he that cherishes my flesh and blood loves my flesh and blood; he that loves my flesh and blood is my friend: *ergo*, he that kisses my wife is my friend. If men could be contented to be what they are,[6]

---

[1] **marry that I may repent:** "marry in haste and repent at leisure"—an old proverb. [2] **shallow:** a superficial judge. [3] **ears:** cultivates; plows. [4] **gives me . . . crop:** allows me time to harvest the crop. [5] **cuckold:** a deceived husband. [6] **what they are:** i.e., cuckolds.

there were no fear in marriage; for young Charbon[1] the puritan and old Poysam[2] the papist, howsome'er their hearts are sever'd in religion, their heads are both one,—they may jowl[3] horns[4] together, like any deer i'th'herd.

COUNTESS.

Wilt thou ever[5] be a foul-mouth'd and calumnious knave?

CLOWN.

A prophet I, madam; and I speak the truth the next[6] way:

For I the ballad will repeat,
Which men full true shall find;
Your marriage comes by destiny,
Your cuckoo[7] sings by kind.[8]

COUNTESS.

Get you gone, sir; I'll talk with you more anon.

STEWARD.

May it please you, madam, that he bid Helen come to you: of her I am to speak.

COUNTESS.

Sirrah, tell my gentlewoman I would speak with her; Helen I mean.

CLOWN.

Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,
Why the Grecians sacked Troy?
Fond[9] done, done fond,
Was this King Priam's[10] joy?
With that she sighed as she stood,
With that she sighed as she stood,
And gave this sentence then;
Among nine bad if one be good,
Among nine bad if one be good,
There's yet one good in ten.

---

[1] **Charbon:** char bon; a corruption of *chair-bonne*—young flesh. [2] **Poysam:** *poisson*—fish. [3] **jowl:** knock; strike. [4] **horns:** the symbol of a cuckold. [5] **ever:** always. [6] **next:** nearest. [7] **cuckoo:** another form of cuckold. [8] **by kind:** according to nature. [9] **Fond:** foolishly. [10] **King Priam:** Paris, King Priam's son, abducted Helen, thus causing the Trojan War.

COUNTESS.

What, one good in ten? you corrupt the song, sirrah.

CLOWN.

One good woman in ten, madam; which is a purifying o'th' song:[1] would God would serve the world so all the year! we'ld find no fault with the tithe-woman,[2] if I were the parson: one in ten, quoth a'! [3] an we might have a good woman born but 'fore every blazing star, or at an earthquake, 'twould mend the lottery[4] well: a man may draw his heart out, ere a' pluck one.

COUNTESS.

You'll begone, sir knave, and do as I command you?

CLOWN.

That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done!—Though honesty[5] be no puritan, yet it will do no hurt; it will wear the surplice of humility[6] over the black gown[7] of a big heart.—I am going, forsooth: the business is for Helen to come hither. [*Exit.*

COUNTESS.

Well, now.

STEWARD.

I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman entirely.

COUNTESS.

Faith, I do: her father bequeath'd her to me; and she herself, without other advantage, may lawfully make title to[8] as much love as she finds: there is more owing her than is paid; and more shall be paid her than she'll demand.

---

[1] **purifying o'th'song:** the clown means that one good woman in ten is too high a figure. [2] **tithe-woman:** that is, the one good woman in ten (a tithe to the church is a tenth of one's income). [3] **quoth a':** says he. [4] **mend the lottery:** improve the odds (against finding a good woman). [5] **honesty:** chastity. [6] **surplice of humility:** the vestment decreed by the church. [7] **black gown:** the dress worn by the Puritans, the symbol of Calvinism. [8] **make title to:** claim.

STEWARD.

Madam, I was very late[1] more near her than I think she wisht me: alone she was, and did communicate to herself her own words to her own ears; she thought, I dare vow for her, they toucht not any stranger sense.[2] Her matter was, she loved your son: Fortune, she said, was no goddess, that had put such difference betwixt their two estates; Love no god, that would not extend his might, only where qualities were level; Dian no queen of virgins, that would suffer her poor knight surprised, without rescue in the first assault, or ransom afterward. This she deliver'd in the most bitter touch[3] of sorrow that e'er I heard virgin exclaim in: which I held my duty speedily to acquaint you withal; sithence,[4] in the loss that may happen, it concerns you something[5] to know it.

COUNTESS.

You have discharged this honestly; keep it to yourself: many likelihoods inform'd me of this before, which hung so tottering in the balance, that I could neither believe nor misdoubt.[6] Pray you, leave me: stall[7] this in your bosom, and I thank you for your honest care: I will speak with you further anon.

[*Exit* STEWARD.

Even so it was with me when I was young:
If we are nature's, these[8] are ours; this thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong;
Our blood to us, this to our blood is born;[9]
It is the show and seal[10] of nature's truth,
Where love's strong passion is imprest in youth:
By our remembrances of days foregone,
Such were our faults; nor then we thought them none.

---

[1] **late:** lately. [2] **they toucht not any stranger sense:** they were heard by no ears other than her own. [3] **touch:** tone. [4] **sithence:** since. [5] **something:** somewhat; in some degree. [6] **misdoubt:** doubt. [7] **stall:** conceal. [8] **these:** situations such as these. [9] **Our blood . . . born:** this passion is born in us. [10] **show and seal:** certified proof.

Enter HELENA.

Her eye is sick on't:[1] I observe her now.

HELENA.

What is your pleasure, madam?

COUNTESS.

You know, Helen,
I am a mother to you.

HELENA.

Mine honourable mistress.

COUNTESS.

Nay, a mother:
Why not a mother? When I said a mother,
Methought you saw a serpent: what's in 'mother,'
That you start at it? I say, I am your mother;
And put you in the catalogue of those
That were enwombed mine: 'tis often seen
Adoption strives with nature; and choice breeds
A native slip[2] to us from foreign seeds:
You ne'er opprest me with a mother's groan,
Yet I express to you a mother's care:—
God's mercy, maiden! does it curd[3] thy blood,
To say, I am thy mother? What's the matter,
That this distemper'd[4] messenger of wet,
The many-colour'd Iris,[5] rounds[6] thine eye?
Why,—that you are my daughter?

HELENA.

That I am not.

COUNTESS.

I say, I am your mother.

HELENA.

Pardon, madam;
The Count Rousillon cannot be my brother:

---

[1] **on't:** because of it.
[2] **slip:** something that is grafted on parent stock.
[3] **curd:** curdle.
[4] **distemper'd:** disturbed.
[5] **Iris:** rainbow.
[6] **rounds:** circles.

I am from humble, he from honour'd name;
No note[1] upon my parents, his all noble:
My master, my dear lord he is; and I
His servant live, and will his vassal die:
He must not be my brother.

COUNTESS.

Nor I your mother?

HELENA.

You are my mother, madam; would you were—
So that my lord your son were not my brother—
Indeed my mother!—or were you both our mothers,
I care no more for than I do for heaven,
So I were not his sister. Can't no other,[2]
But I your daughter, he must be my brother?

COUNTESS.

Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law:
God shield, you mean it not! 'daughter' and 'mother'
So strive upon your pulse. What, pale again?
My fear hath catcht your fondness: now I see
The mystery of your loneliness, and find
Your salt tears' head:[3] now to all sense 'tis gross[4]
You love my son; invention is ashamed,
Against the proclamation of thy passion,
To say thou dost not: therefore tell me true;
But tell me then, 'tis so;—for, look, thy cheeks
Confess it, th'one to th'other; and thine eyes
See it so grossly shown in thy behaviours,
That in their kind[5] they speak it: only sin
And hellish obstinacy tie thy tongue,
That truth should be suspected.[6] Speak is't so?
If it be so, you have wound a goodly clew;[7]

---

[1] **note:** mark of distinction. [2] **Can't no other:** can it not be otherwise. [3] **head:** source. [4] **gross:** obvious. [5] **in their kind:** in their own language. [6] **suspected:** guessed at. [7] **wound a goodly clew:** thoroughly entangled yourself; *clew:* a ball of twine.

If it be not, forswear't: howe'er, I charge thee,
As heaven shall work in me for thine avail,
To tell me truly.

HELENA.

Good madam, pardon me!

COUNTESS.

Do you love my son?

HELENA.

Your pardon, noble mistress!

COUNTESS.

Love you my son?

HELENA.

Do not you love him, madam?

COUNTESS.

Go not about;[1] my love hath in't a bond,
Whereof the world takes note:[2] come, come, disclose
The state of your affection; for your passions
Have to the full appeacht.[3]

HELENA.

Then, I confess,
Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,
That before you, and next unto high heaven,
I love your son:—
My friends[4] were poor, but honest; so's my love:
Be not offended; for it hurts not him,
That he is loved of me: I follow him not
By any token of presumptuous suit;
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him;
Yet never know how that desert should be.
I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
Yet in this captious[5] and intenible[6] sieve
I still pour in the waters of my love,

---

[1] **Go not about:** do not dissemble. [2] **Whereof the world takes note:** which the world acknowledges. [3] **appeacht:** impeached; informed against you. [4] **friends:** relatives. [5] **captious:** that is, something capable of receiving what is poured into it. [6] **intenible:** incapable of retaining.

And lack not to lose still:[1] thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more. My dearest madam,
Let not your hate encounter[2] with my love,
For loving where you do; but, if yourself,
Whose aged honour cites a virtuous youth,
Did ever, in so true a flame of liking,
Wish chastely, and love dearly, that your Dian
Was both herself and Love;[3] O, then, give pity
To her, whose state is such, that cannot choose
But lend and give, where she is sure to lose;
That seeks not to find that her search implies,
But, riddle-like,[4] lives sweetly where she dies!

COUNTESS.

Had you not lately an intent,—speak truly,—
To go to Paris?

HELENA.

Madam, I had.

COUNTESS.

Wherefore?

Tell true.

HELENA.

I will tell truth; by grace itself, I swear.
You know my father left me some prescriptions
Of rare and proved effects, such as his reading
And manifest experience had collected
For general sovereignty;[5] and that he will'd me
In heedfull'st reservation to bestow them,
As notes, whose faculties inclusive were,
More than they were in note:[6] amongst the rest,
There is a remedy, approved, set down,
To cure the desperate languishings whereof

---

[1] **lack not to lose still:** I still have love to give no matter how much is lost. [2] **encounter:** quarrel; fight. [3] **both herself and Love:** both chaste and passionate. [4] **riddle-like:** without telling the secret of her love (like a sphinx). [5] **For general sovereignty:** because of their general use as remedies in various cases. [6] **whose faculties . . . note:** whose power was greater than was known; therefore, they were to be used with caution.

The king is render'd lost.[1]

COUNTESS.

This was your motive
For Paris, was it? speak.

HELENA.

My lord your son made me to think of this;
Else Paris, and the medicine, and the king,
Had from the conversation[2] of my thoughts
Haply[3] been absent then.

COUNTESS.

But think you, Helen,
If you should tender[4] your supposed aid,
He would receive it? he and his physicians
Are of a mind; he, that they cannot help him;
They, that they cannot help: how shall they credit
A poor unlearned virgin, when the schools,
Embowell'd [5] of their doctrine, have left off
The danger to itself? [6]

HELENA.

There's something hints,[7]
More than my father's skill, which was the greatest
Of his profession, that his good receipt
Shall, for my legacy, be sanctified
By th'luckiest stars in heaven: and, would your honour
But give me leave to try success,[8] I'ld venture
This well-lost[9] life of mine on his Grace's cure
By such a day and hour.

COUNTESS.

Dost thou believe't?

HELENA.

Ay, madam, knowingly.[10]

---

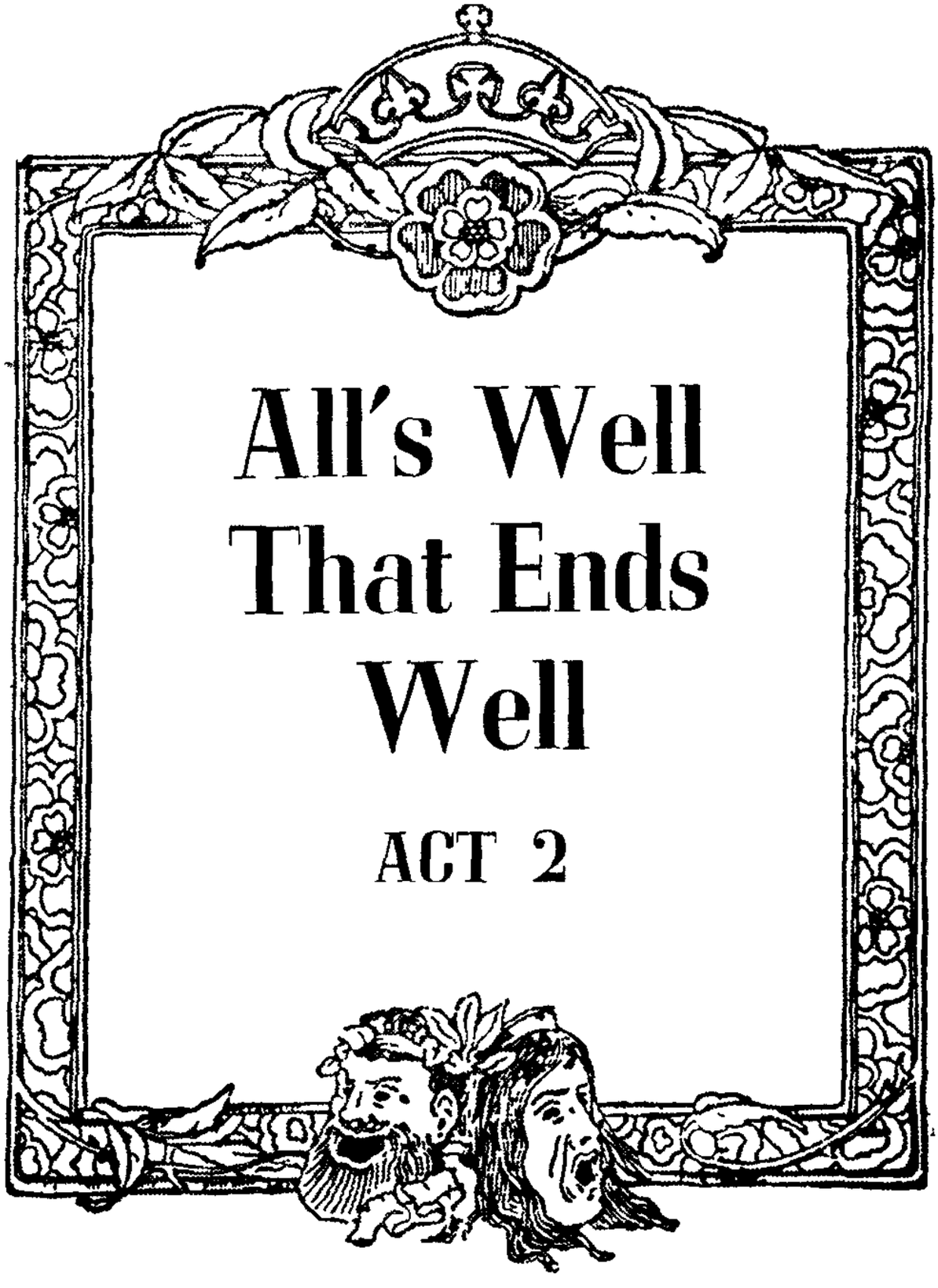
[1] **render'd lost:** given up as lost (that is, his disease is incurable). [2] **conversation:** intercourse. [3] **Haply:** perhaps. [4] **tender:** offer. [5] **Embowell'd:** disemboweled; exhausted. [6] **have left . . . itself:** have abandoned the dangerous ailment to run its course. [7] **There's something hints:** something (*intuition*) tells me. [8] **to try success:** to test the outcome. [9] **well-lost:** well worth losing (in such a cause). [10] **knowingly:** I know what I am doing.

COUNTESS.

Why, Helen, thou shalt have my leave, and love,[1]
Means, and attendants, and my loving greetings
To those of mine in court: I'll stay at home,
And pray God's blessing into thy attempt:
Be gone to-morrow; and be sure of this,
What I can help thee to, thou shalt not miss.

[*Exeunt.*

[1] **leave and love:** loving permission to go.



All's Well That Ends Well

ACT 2

ACT II

THE FRENCH lords leave the royal court to take part in the Tuscan wars. Bertram, however, to his regret, is left behind on account of his youth. Meanwhile Helena arrives and is presented to the King by Lafeu. The King is sceptical that she can cure him but when Helena offers her own life as forfeit should she fail he agrees to let her try. At her request he promises that should she succeed he will give her in marriage to any subject of his whom she asks for. She cures the King and of course chooses Bertram who objects on the grounds of her inferior rank and because he does not love her. On being threatened with royal "revenge and hate" he reluctantly takes her. Encouraged by his worthless follower friend Parolles, he decides to go off to the wars and after sending Parolles to Helena to tell her of his decision he later coldly takes his leave of her, advising her to go home to Rousillon.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Paris. A room in the KING'S *palace.*

Enter the KING, *with divers young* LORDS, *taking leave for the Florentine war;* BERTRAM, PAROLLES, *and* ATTENDANTS. *Flourish of cornets.*

KING.

Farewell, young lords; these warlike principles
Do not throw from you: and you, my lords, farewell:
Share the advice betwixt you; if both gain, all
The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received,
And is enough for both.

FIRST LORD.

'Tis our hope, sir,
After well-enter'd soldiers,[1] to return
And find your Grace in health.

KING.

No, no, it cannot be; and yet my heart
Will not confess he owes[2] the malady
That doth my life besiege. Farewell, young lords;
Whether I live or die, be you the sons
Of worthy Frenchmen: let higher Italy[3]—
Those lated [4] that inherit but the fall

---

[1] **After well-enter'd soldiers:** after showing ourselves as well-initiated soldiers.

[2] **owes:** owns.

[3] **higher Italy:** the highest or noblest of Italy.

[4] **lated:** belated ones.

Of the last monarchy—see that you come
Not to woo honour, but to wed it; when
The bravest questant[1] shrinks, find what you seek,[2]
That fame may cry you loud:[3] I say, farewell.

SECOND LORD.

Health, at your bidding, serve your majesty!

KING.

Those girls of Italy,[4] take heed of them:
They say, our French lack language to deny,
If they demand: beware of being captives,
Before you serve.[5]

BOTH LORDS.

Our hearts receive your warnings.

KING.

Farewell.—Come hither to me. [*Exit, attended.*

FIRST LORD.

O my sweet lord, that you will stay behind us!

PAROLLES.

'Tis not his fault, the spark.[6]

SECOND LORD.

O, 'tis brave wars!

PAROLLES.

Most admirable: I have seen those wars.

BERTRAM.

I am commanded here, and kept a coil with[7]
'Too young,' and 'the next year,' and ' 'tis too early.'

PAROLLES.

An[8] thy mind stand to't, boy, steal away bravely.

BERTRAM.

I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,[9]
Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,[10]

---

[1] **questant:** seeker; one who is on the quest. [2] **find what you seek:** never give up the pursuit, or quest. [3] **cry you loud:** sing your praises. [4] **girls of Italy:** courtesans, whose charms were well known in England. [5] **beware . . . serve:** beware of becoming a love captive before you begin your duty as a soldier. [6] **the spark:** the fashionable young man. [7] **kept a coil with:** made a fuss about. [8] **An:** if. [9] **the forehorse to a smock:** literally, the lead horse in a team driven by a woman. [10] **Creaking . . . masonry:** dancing on tiled floors.

Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn
But one to dance with! [1] By heaven, I'll steal away.

FIRST LORD.

There's honour in the theft.

PAROLLES.

Commit it, count.

SECOND LORD.

I am your accessary;[2] and so, farewell.

BERTRAM.

I grow to you, and our parting is a tortured body.

FIRST LORD.

Farewell, captain.

SECOND LORD.

Sweet Monsieur Parolles!

PAROLLES.

Noble heroes, my sword and yours are kin. Good sparks and lustrous, a word, good metals:—you shall find in the regiment of the Spinii one Captain Spurio, with his cicatrice,[3] an emblem of war, here on his sinister[4] cheek; it was this very sword entrencht[5] it: say to him, I live; and observe his reports for me.

SECOND LORD.

We shall, noble captain.

PAROLLES.

Mars dote on you for his novices!

[*Exeunt* LORDS.

What will ye do?

BERTRAM.

Stay; the king!

Enter KING; BERTRAM & PAROLLES *retire.*

---

[1] **no sword . . . with:** an allusion to the practice of wearing ornamental swords at dances.
[2] **accessary:** accessory; accomplice.
[3] **cicatrice:** star.
[4] **sinister:** left.
[5] **entrencht:** gashed.

PAROLLES.

Use a more spacious ceremony to the noble lords; you have restrain'd yourself within the list[1] of too cold an adieu: be more expressive to them: for they wear themselves in the cap of the time,[2] there do muster true gait, eat, speak, and move under the influence of the most received[3] star; and though the devil lead the measure,[4] such are to be follow'd: after them, and take a more dilated[5] farewell.

BERTRAM.

And I will do so.

PAROLLES.

Worthy fellows; and like[6] to prove most sinewy sword-men.

[*Exeunt* BERTRAM *and* PAROLLES.

Enter LAFEU.

LAFEU [*kneeling*].

Pardon, my lord, for me and for my tidings.

KING.

I'll fee[7] thee to stand up.

LAFEU [*rising*].

Then here's a man stands that has brought his pardon.
I would you had kneel'd, my lord, to ask me mercy;
And that, at my bidding, you could so stand up.

KING.

I would I had; so[8] I had broke thy pate,[9]
And askt thee mercy for't.

LAFEU.

Good faith, across:[10] but, my good lord, 'tis thus;
Will you be cured of your infirmity?

KING.

No.

---

[1] **list:** confines. [2] **they wear . . . time:** they are the arbiters of fashion. [3] **most received:** most auspicious. [4] **measure:** dance. [5] **dilated:** prolonged. [6] **like:** are likely. [7] **fee:** pay. [8] **so:** provided that. [9] **pate:** head. [10] **across:** "break across," a term used in tilting; a passage of wit.

LAFEU.

O, will you eat no grapes,[1] my royal fox?
Yes, but you will my noble grapes, an if [2]
My royal fox could reach them: I have seen a medicine[3]
That's able to breathe life into a stone,
Quicken a rock,[4] and make you dance canary[5]
With sprightly fire and motion; whose simple[6] touch
Is powerful to araise King Pepin,[7] nay,
To give great Charlemain a pen in's hand,
And write to her a love-line.

KING.

What 'her' is this?

LAFEU.

Why, doctor she: my lord, there's one arrived,
If you will see her:—now, by my faith and honour,
If seriously I may convey my thoughts
In this my light deliverance,[8] I have spoke
With one that, in her sex, her years, profession,[9]
Wisdom, and constacy, hath amazed me more
Than I dare blame my weakness:[10] will you see her,
For that is her demand,—and know her business?
That done, laugh well at me.

KING.

Now, good Lafeu,
Bring in the admiration;[11] that we with thee
May spend our wonder too, or take off [12] thine
By wondering how thou took'st it.

LAFEU.

Nay, I'll fit you,
And not be all day neither. [*Exit.*

KING.

Thus he his special nothing ever prologues.

---

[1] **eat no grapes:** a reference to Æsop's fable of the fox who called the grapes sour because he could not reach them. [2] **an if:** if. [3] **medicine:** physician. [4] **Quicken a rock:** make a rock come alive. [5] **canary:** a lively dance. [6] **simple:** mere. [7] **King Pepin:** a Frankish king of the eighth century, and, therefore, long dead. [8] **light deliverance:** jesting manner. [9] **profession:** that which she professes herself capable of doing. [10] **more . . . weakness:** more than can be accounted for by my susceptibility to beauty. [11] **the admiration:** this paragon. [12] **take off:** reduce.

Enter LAFEU, *with* HELENA.

LAFEU.

Nay, come your ways.

KING.

This haste hath wings indeed.

LAFEU.

Nay, come your ways;
This is his majesty, say your mind to him:
A traitor you do look like; but such traitors
His majesty seldom fears: I am Cressid's uncle,[1]
That dare leave two together; fare you well.

[*Exit.*

KING.

Now, fair one, does your business follow[2] us?

HELENA.

Ay, my good lord.
Gerard de Narbon was my father; one,
In what he did profess, well found.[3]

KING.

I knew him.

HELENA.

The rather will I spare my praises towards him;
Knowing him is enough. On's bed of death
Many receipts he gave me; chiefly one,
Which, as the dearest issue of his practice,
And of his old experience th'only darling,[4]
He bade me store up, as a triple[5] eye,
Safer than mine own two, more dear: I have so:
And, hearing your high majesty is toucht
With that malignant cause, wherein the honour
Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power,
I come to tender[6] it, and my appliance,[7]
With all bound humbleness.

---

[1] **Cressid's uncle:** that is, he is kin to Panderus, the first of the panders, or procurers. [2] **follow:** concern. [3] **well found:** of acknowledged skill. [4] **of his . . . darling:** his only highly treasured remedy during the last years of his life. [5] **triple:** third. [6] **tender:** offer. [7] **appliance:** application of it; treatment.

KING.

We thank you, maiden;
But may not be so credulous of cure,
When our most learned doctors leave us,[1] and
The congregated college[2] have concluded
That labouring art[3] can never ransom nature
From her inaidable state,—I say we must not
So stain[4] our judgement, or corrupt our hope,
To prostitute[5] our past-cure malady
To empirics;[6] or to dissever so
Our great self and our credit, to esteem
A senseless help,[7] when help past sense we deem.[8]

HELENA.

My duty,[9] then, shall pay me for my pains:
I will no more enforce[10] mine office on you;
Humbly entreating from your royal thoughts
A modest one,[11] to bear me back again.

KING.

I cannot give thee less, to be call'd grateful:
Thou thought'st to help me; and such thanks I give
As one near death to those that wish him live:
But, what at full I know, thou know'st no part;
I knowing all my peril, thou no art.[12]

HELENA.

What I can do can do no hurt to try,
Since you set up your rest[13] 'gainst remedy.
He that of greatest works is finisher,
Oft does them by the weakest minister:[14]
So holy writ in babes hath judgement shown,
When judges have been babes; great floods have flown
From simple sources; and great seas have dried,

---

[1] **leave us:** give us up for lost. [2] **congregated college:** Royal College of Physicians. [3] **labouring art:** human skill. [4] **stain:** taint. [5] **prostitute:** submit. [6] **empirics:** quacks. [7] **help:** cure. [8] **when help . . . deem:** when we consider that help is beyond all reasonable hope. [9] **my duty:** the knowledge of having done my duty. [10] **enforce:** force. [11] **A modest one:** a moderately favorable thought. [12] **art:** cure. [13] **set up your rest:** are determined (from the card game *primero*). [14] **minister:** agent.

When miracles have by the greatest been denied.
Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises; and oft it hits
Where hope is coldest, and despair most fits.

KING.

I must not hear thee; fare thee well, kind maid;
Thy pains, not used, must by thyself be paid:
Proffers[1] not took reap thanks for their reward.

HELENA.

Inspired merit so by breath is barr'd:[2]
It is not so with Him that all things knows,
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows;[3]
But most it is presumption in us when
The help of heaven we count the act of men.
Dear sir, to my endeavours give consent;
Of heaven, not me, make an experiment.
I am not an impostor, that proclaim
Myself against the level of mine aim;
But know I think, and think I know most sure,
My art is not past power, nor you past cure.

KING.

Art thou so confident? within what space
Hopest thou my cure?

HELENA.

The great'st grace lending grace,
Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring
Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring;[4]
Ere twice in murk and occidental damp[5]
Moist Hesperus[6] hath quencht his sleepy lamp;
Or four and twenty times the pilot's glass[7]
Hath told the thievish minutes how they pass;
What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,
Health shall live free, and sickness freely die.

---

[1] **Proffers:** offers of help. [2] **Inspired merit . . . barr'd:** divine assistance is barred by being denied a test. [3] **square . . . shows:** form our opinions according to outward appearances. [4] **shall bring . . . ring:** shall carry the sun god on his daily circuit. [5] **murk and occidental damp:** the gloom and fog of sunset. [6] **Hesperus:** the evening star (Venus). [7] **pilot's glass:** hourglass.

KING.

Upon thy certainty and confidence
What darest thou venture?

HELENA.

Tax of impudence,[1]—
A strumpet's boldness, a divulged shame,—
Traduced by odious ballads; my maiden's name
Sear'd otherwise; nay, worse, if worse, extended
With vilest torture let my life be ended.

KING.

Methinks in thee some blessed spirit doth speak,
His powerful sound within an organ weak:
And what impossibility would slay
In common sense,[2] sense saves another way.
Thy life is dear; for all, that life can rate
Worth name of life, in thee hath estimate,[3]—
Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all
That happiness and prime[4] can happy call:
Thou this to hazard, needs must intimate
Skill infinite or monstrous desperate.[5]
Sweet practiser, thy physic I will try,
That ministers thine own death, if I die.

HELENA.

If I break time,[6] or flinch in property[7]
Of what I spoke, unpitied let me die,
And well deserved: not helping, death's my fee;
But, if I help, what do you promise me?

KING.

Make thy demand.

HELENA.

But will you make it even? [8]

KING.

Ay, by my sceptre and my hopes of heaven.

---

[1] **Tax of impudence:** charge or reproach of shamelessness. [2] **what impossibility . . . sense:** what common sense says is impossible. [3] **estimate:** value. [4] **prime:** the flower of life. [5] **monstrous desperate:** the desperate need of a miracle. [6] **break time:** fail to meet the deadline. [7] **property:** that which is proper to. [8] **make it even:** fulfill it.

HELENA.

Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand
What husband in thy power I will command:
Exempted be from me the arrogance
To choose from forth the royal blood of France,
My low and humble name to propagate
With any branch or image[1] of thy state;
But such a one, thy vassal, whom I know
Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow.

KING.

Here is my hand; the premises observed,
Thy will by my performance shall be served:
So make the choice of thy own time; for I,
Thy resolved patient, on thee still rely.[2]
More should I question thee, and more I must,—
Though more to know could not be more to trust,—
From whence thou camest, how tended on: but rest
Unquestion'd welcome, and undoubted blest.—
Give me some help here, ho!—If thou proceed
As high as word,[3] my deed shall match thy deed.

[*Flourish. Exeunt.*

Scene II.

Rousillon. A room in the house of the COUNTESS.

Enter COUNTESS *and* CLOWN.

COUNTESS.

Come on, sir; I shall now put you to the height of your breeding.[4]

CLOWN.

I will show myself highly fed and lowly taught:[5] I know my business is but to the court.

---

[1] **image:** counterpart.
[2] **still rely:** rely on you in everything.
[3] **As high as word:** as you have promised.
[4] **put . . . breeding:** test your abilities to the fullest.
[5] **highly fed and lowly taught:** from the proverb: "Better fed than taught."

COUNTESS.

To the court! why, what place make you special, when you put off that with such contempt? But to the court!

CLOWN.

Truly, madam, if God have lent a man any manners, he may easily put it off at court: he that cannot make a leg,[1] put off's cap,[2] kiss his hand, and say nothing, has neither leg, hands, lip, nor cap; and, indeed, such a fellow, to say precisely, were not for the court: but, for me, I have an answer will serve all men.

COUNTESS.

Marry, that's a bountiful answer that fits all questions.

CLOWN.

It is like a barber's chair, that fits all buttocks,—the pin-buttock, the quatch-buttock, the brawn-buttock, or any buttock.

COUNTESS.

Will your answer serve fit to all questions?

CLOWN.

As fit as ten groats[3] is for the hand of an attorney, as your French crown[4] for your taffeta punk,[5] as Tib's rush[6] for Tom's forefinger, as a pancake for Shrove-Tuesday, a morris for May-day, as the nail to his hole, the cuckold to his horn, as a scolding quean[7] to a wrangling knave, as the nun's lip to the friar's mouth, nay, as the pudding to his skin.[8]

COUNTESS.

Have you, I say, an answer of such fitness for all questions?

CLOWN.

From below your duke to beneath your constable, it will fit any question.

---

[1] **make a leg:** make a courtly bow. [2] **put off's cap:** doff his hat. [3] **ten groats:** a lawyer's fee (a groat was worth fourpence). [4] **French crown:** the prostitute's fee. [5] **taffeta punk:** showy prostitute. [6] **Tib's rush:** a ring made of rushes and used in mock-marriages; *Tib*: a low or vulgar woman. [7] **quean:** strumpet. [8] **as the nun's lip . . . skin:** from the proverb, "As fit as a pudding (sausage) for a friar's mouth."

COUNTESS.

It must be an answer of most monstrous size that must fit all demands.

CLOWN.

But a trifle neither, in good faith, if the learned should speak truth of it: here it is, and all that belongs to't. Ask me if I am a courtier: it shall do you no harm to learn.

COUNTESS.

To be young again, if we could:—I will be a fool in question, hoping to be the wiser by your answer. I pray you, sir, are you a courtier?

CLOWN.

'O Lord, sir!' [1]—there's a simple putting off.—More, more, a hundred of them.

COUNTESS.

Sir, I am a poor friend of yours that loves you.

CLOWN.

'O Lord, sir!'—Thick,[2] thick, spare not me.

COUNTESS.

I think, sir, you can eat none of this homely meat.

CLOWN.

'O Lord, sir!'—Nay, put me to't,[3] I warrant you.

COUNTESS.

You were lately whipt, sir, as I think.

CLOWN.

'O Lord, sir!'—Spare not me.

COUNTESS.

Do you cry, 'O Lord, sir!' at your whipping, and 'Spare me not'? Indeed, your 'O Lord, sir!' is very sequent to your whipping: you would answer very well to a whipping, if you were but bound to't.[4]

---

[1] **'O Lord, sir':** the meaningless phrase of an affected courtier.
[2] **Thick:** quickly.
[3] **put me to't:** give me something difficult to reply to.
[4] **bound to't:** (1) bound by oath to answer; (2) bound to a whipping post.

CLOWN.

I ne'er had worse luck in my life in my 'O Lord, sir!' I see things may serve long, but not serve ever.

COUNTESS.

I play the noble housewife[1] with the time,
To entertain it so merrily with a fool.

CLOWN.

'O Lord, sir!'—why, there't serves well again.

COUNTESS.

An end, sir: to your business. Give Helen this,
And urge her to a present[2] answer back:
Commend me to my kinsmen and my son:
This is not much.

CLOWN.

Not much commendation to them.

COUNTESS.

Not much employment for you: you understand me?

CLOWN.

Most fruitfully: I am there before my legs.

COUNTESS.

Haste you again.[3] [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

Paris. A room in the KING'S *palace.*

Enter LAFEU *and* PAROLLES.

LAFEU.

They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern[4] and familiar, things supernatural and causeless.[5] Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors;

---

[1] **housewife:** hussy.
[2] **a present:** an immediate.
[3] **again:** back again.
[4] **modern:** commonplace.
[5] **causeless:** unexplainable.

ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge,[1] when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.[2] Why, 'tis the rarest argument[3] of wonder that hath shot out in our latter times.

PAROLLES.

And so 'tis.

LAFEU.

To be relinquisht of the artists,[4]—

PAROLLES.

So I say.

LAFEU.

Both of Galen[5] and Paracelsus,[6] of all the learned and authentic[7] fellows,—

PAROLLES.

Right; so I say.

LAFEU.

That gave him out[8] incurable,—

PAROLLES.

Why, there 'tis; so say I too.

LAFEU.

Not to be helpt,—

PAROLLES.

Right; as 'twere, a man assured of a—

LAFEU.

Uncertain life, and sure death.

PAROLLES.

Just,[9] you say well; so would I have said.

LAFEU.

I may truly say, it is a novelty to the world.

---

[1] **ensconcing . . . knowledge:** taking refuge in knowledge that we think we possess. [2] **submit . . . fear:** acknowledge that we fear the unknown. [3] **argument:** subject. [4] ***artists:*** *holders of art degrees; scholars.* [5] **Galen:** a noted Greek physician. [6] **Paracelsus:** von Hohenheim, a Swiss physician of the 16th century, who disparaged Greek medicine. [7] **authentic:** accredited. [8] **gave him out:** reported him. [9] **Just:** Precisely.

PAROLLES.

It is, indeed: if you will have it in showing,[1] you shall read it in—What do ye call there?—

LAFEU.

A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor.

PAROLLES.

That's it I would have said, the very same.

LAFEU.

Why, your dolphin[2] is not lustier: 'fore me,[3] I speak in respect—

PAROLLES.

Nay, 'tis strange, 'tis very strange, that is the brief and the tedious of it;[4] and he's of a most facinerious[5] spirit that will not acknowledge it to be the—

LAFEU.

Very hand of heaven—

PAROLLES.

Ay, so I say.

LAFEU.

In a most weak and debile[6] minister great power, great transcendence: which should, indeed, give us a further use to be made than alone the recovery of the king.

PAROLLES.

As to be—

LAFEU.

Generally thankful.

PAROLLES.

I would have said it; you say well.—Here comes the king.

---

[1] **in showing:** in print. [2] **dolphin:** possibly a quibbling allusion to the dauphin. [3] **'fore me:** upon my soul. [4] **the brief and the tedious of it:** a reversed version of "the long and short of it." [5] **facinerious:** facinorous; wicked. [6] **debile:** feeble.

Enter KING, HELENA, *and* ATTENDANTS.

LAFEU.

Lustig,[1] as the Dutchman says: I'll like a maid the better, whilst I have a tooth in my head: why, he's able to lead her a coranto.[2]

PAROLLES.

Mort du vinaigre! [3] is not this Helen?

LAFEU.

'Fore God, I think so.

KING.

Go, call before me all the lords in court.—

[*Exit an* ATTENDANT.

Sit, my preserver, by thy patient's side;
And with this healthful hand, whose banisht sense[4]
Thou hast repeal'd,[5] a second time receive
The confirmation of my promised gift,
Which but attends[6] thy naming.

Enter three or four LORDS *and* BERTRAM.

Fair maid, send forth thine eye: this youthful parcel [7]
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing,
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice
I have to use: thy frank[8] election make;
Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.[9]

HELENA.

To each of you one fair and virtuous mistress
Fall, when Love please!—marry, to each, but one!

LAFEU.

I'ld give bay curtal [10] and his furniture,[11]
My mouth no more were broken than these boys',
And writ as little beard.[12]

---

[1] **Lustig:** lusty; sprightly. [2] **coranto:** sprightly dance. [3] ***Mort du vinaigre:*** a meaningless oath; literally, "death of vinegar." [4] **sense:** power of feeling. [5] **repeal'd:** called back. [6] **attends:** awaits. [7] **parcel:** group. [8] **frank:** free. [9] **forsake:** deny. [10] **curtal:** a common name for a horse. [11] **furniture:** trappings. [12] **My mouth . . . beard:** that my age was no greater than these boys'.

KING.

Peruse them well:
Not one of these but had a noble father.

HELENA.

Gentlemen,
Heaven hath, through me, restored the king to health.

ALL.

We understand it, and thank heaven for you.

HELENA.

I am a simple maid; and therein wealthiest,
That I protest I simply[1] am a maid.—
Please it your majesty, I have done already:
The blushes in my cheeks thus whisper me,
'We blush that thou shouldst choose; but, be refused,[2]
Let the white death[3] sit on thy cheek for ever;
We'll ne'er come there again.'

KING.

Make choice; and, see,
Who shuns thy love shuns all his love in me.

HELENA.

Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly;
And to imperial Love, that god most high,
Do my sighs stream.—[*to* FIRST LORD] Sir, will you hear my suit?

FIRST LORD.

And grant it.

HELENA.

Thanks, sir; all the rest is mute.[4]

LAFEU.

I had rather be in this choice than throw ames-ace[5] for my life.

---

[1] **simply:** truly.
[2] **be refused:** should you be refused.
[3] **the white death:** the paleness of death.
[4] **all the rest is mute:** I have no more to say to you.
[5] **ames-ace:** two aces, the lowest throw at dice (Lafeu means just the opposite).

HELENA [*to* SECOND LORD].

The honour, sir, that flames in your fair eyes,
Before I speak, too threateningly replies:
Love make your fortunes twenty times above
Her that so wishes and her humble love!

SECOND LORD.

No better, if you please.

HELENA.

My wish receive,
Which great Love grant! and so, I take my leave.

LAFEU.

Do all they deny her? [1] An[2] they were sons of mine, I'ld have them whipt; or I would send them to the Turk, to make eunuchs of.

HELENA [*to* THIRD LORD].

Be not afraid that I your hand should take;
I'll never do you wrong for your own sake:
Blessing upon your vows! and in your bed
Find fairer fortune, if you ever wed!

LAFEU.

These boys are boys of ice, they'll none have her: sure, they are bastards to the English; the French ne'er got[3] 'em.

HELENA [*to* FOURTH LORD].

You are too young, too happy,[4] and too good,
To make yourself a son out of my blood.

FOURTH LORD.

Fair one, I think not so.

LAFEU.

There's one grape yet,—I am sure thy father drunk wine:[5] —but if thou be'st not an ass, I am a youth of fourteen; I have known thee already.

---

[1] **Do all they deny her:** do they all refuse her.
[2] **An:** if.
[3] **got:** begot.
[4] **happy:** *fortunate.*
[5] **drunk wine:** bequeathed you a virile body; an allusion to the old proverb: "Good drinks make good blood."

HELENA [*to* BERTRAM].

I dare not say I take you; but I give
Me and my service, ever whilst I live,
Into your guiding power.—This is the man.

KING.

Why, then, young Bertram, take her; she's thy wife.

BERTRAM.

My wife, my liege! I shall beseech your highness,
In such a business give me leave to use
The help of mine own eyes.

KING.

Know'st thou not, Bertram,
What she has done for me?

BERTRAM.

Yes, my good lord;
But never hope to know why I should marry her.

KING.

Thou know'st she has raised me from my sickly bed.

BERTRAM.

But follows it, my lord, to bring me down
Must answer for[1] your raising? I know her well:
She had her breeding at my father's charge.[2]
A poor physician's daughter my wife!—Disdain
Rather corrupt me ever! [3]

KING.

'Tis only title[4] thou disdain'st in her, the which
I can build up. Strange is it that our bloods,
Of colour, weight, and heat, pour'd all together,
Would quite confound [5] distinction, yet stand off
In differences so mighty.[6] If she be
All that is virtuous,—save what thou dislikest,
A poor physician's daughter,—thou dislikest

---

[1] **Must answer for:** must I repay. [2] **charge:** expense. [3] **Disdain . . . ever:** I choose your contempt rather than to be brought down by marriage to one beneath me. [4] **only title:** lack of a title. [5] **confound:** baffle. [6] **stand off . . . mighty:** yet you think your blood (pedigree) separates you so very far from hers.

Of virtue for the name: but do not so:
From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by th'doer's deed:
Where great additions swell's,[1] and virtue none,[2]
It is a dropsied [3] honour: good alone
Is good without a name;[4] vileness is so;[5]
The property[6] by what it is should go,
Not by the title. She is young, wise, fair;
In these to nature she's immediate heir;
And these breed honour: that is honour's scorn,
Which challenges itself as honour's born,
And is not like the sire: honours thrive,
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers:[7] the mere word's a slave,
Debosht[8] on every tomb, on every grave
A lying trophy; and as oft is dumb
Where dust and damn'd oblivion is the tomb
Of honour'd bones indeed. What should be said?
If thou canst like this creature as a maid,
I can create the rest: virtue and she[9]
Is her own dower; honour and wealth from me.

BERTRAM.

I cannot love her, nor will strive[10] to do't.

KING.

Thou wrong'st thyself, if thou shouldst strive to choose.

HELENA.

That you are well restored, my lord, I'm glad:
Let the rest go.

KING.

My honour's at the stake; which to defeat,
I must produce my power. Here, take her hand,
Proud scornful boy, unworthy this good gift;

---

[1] **additions swell's:** titles make us proud. [2] **none:** not at all. [3] **dropsied:** unnaturally swollen; puffed up. [4] **good . . . name:** goodness does not need a title to make it so. [5] **vileness is so:** vileness is vileness so matter what it is called. [6] **property:** quality. [7] **foregoers:** forebears; ancestors. [8] **Debosht:** debauched, by being used too frequently. [9] **she:** her intrinsic qualities. [10] **strive:** attempt.

That dost in vile misprision[1] shackle up
My love and her desert; that canst not dream,
We, poising us[2] in her defective scale,
Shall weigh thee to the beam;[3] that wilt not know,
It is in us to plant thine honour where
We please to have it grow. Check thy contempt:
Obey our will, which travails in thy good:
Believe not thy disdain, but presently
Do thine own fortunes that obedient right
Which both thy duty owes and our power claims;
Or I will throw thee from my care for ever
Into the staggers[4] and the careless[5] lapse
Of youth and ignorance; both my revenge and hate
Loosing upon thee, in the name of justice,
Without all terms of pity.[6] Speak; thine answer.

BERTRAM.

Pardon, my gracious lord; for I submit
My fancy[7] to your eyes: when I consider
What great creation and what dole[8] of honour
Flies where you bid it, I find that she, which late[9]
Was in my nobler thoughts most base, is now
The praised of the king; who, so ennobled,
Is, as 'twere, born so.

KING.

Take her by the hand,
And tell her she is thine: to whom I promise
A counterpoise;[10] if not to thy estate,
A balance more replete.

BERTRAM.

I take her hand.

KING.

Good fortune and the favour of the king
Smile upon this contract; whose ceremony

---

misprision: contempt; disdain. [2] **poising us:** adding my own weight. [3] ***weigh thee to the beam:*** so outweigh you that you will strike the beam (the bar of a balance). [4] **the staggers:** bewilderment; perplexity. [5] **careless:** cureless. [6] ***Without all terms of pity:*** without any degree of compassion. [7] **fancy:** liking; love. [8] **dole:** allotment; share. [9] **late:** recently. [10] ***A counterpoise:*** a dowry equalling, if not more valuable than, your estate.

Shall seem expedient[1] on the now-born brief,[2]
And be perform'd to-night: the solemn feast
Shall more attend upon the coming space,[3]
Expecting absent friends. As thou lovest her,
Thy love's to me religious; else, does err.

[*Exeunt all but* LAFEU *and* PAROLLES.

LAFEU.

Do you hear, monsieur? a word with you.

PAROLLES.

Your pleasure, sir?

LAFEU.

Your lord and master did well to make his recantation.[4]

PAROLLES.

Recantation!—My lord! my master!

LAFEU.

Ay; is it not a language I speak?

PAROLLES.

A most harsh one, and not to be understood without bloody succeeding.[5] My master!

LAFEU.

Are you companion to the Count Rousillon?

PAROLLES.

To any count,—to all counts,—to what is man.

LAFEU.

To what is count's man:[6] count's master is of another style.

PAROLLES.

You are too old, sir; let it satisfy you, you are too old.

LAFEU.

I must tell thee, sirrah, I write man;[7] to which title age cannot bring thee.[8]

---

[1] **seem expedient:** appear to follow quickly. [2] **now-born brief:** the contract just arranged. [3] **Shall more attend . . . space:** shall await a more convenient time. [4] **recantation:** retraction. [5] **succeeding:** results; consequences. [6] **count's man:** count's servant. [7] **write man:** call myself a man. [8] **age cannot bring thee:** that is, Parolles will always remain a servant.

PAROLLES.

What I dare too well do, I dare not do.

LAFEU.

I did think thee, for two ordinaries,[1] to be a pretty wise fellow; thou didst make tolerable vent of thy travel;[2] it might pass: yet the scarfs and the bannerets[3] about thee did manifoldly dissuade me from believing thee a vessel of too great a burthen.[4] I have now found thee;[5] when I lose thee again, I care not: yet art thou good for nothing but taking up;[6] and that thou'rt scarce worth.

PAROLLES.

Hadst thou not the privilege of antiquity[7] upon thee,—

LAFEU.

Do not plunge thyself too far in anger, lest thou hasten thy trial; which if—Lord have mercy on thee for a hen! So, my good window of lattice,[8] fare thee well: thy casement I need not open, for I look through thee. Give me thy hand.

PAROLLES.

My lord, you give me most egregious[9] indignity.

LAFEU.

Ay, with all my heart; and thou art worthy of it.

PAROLLES.

I have not, my lord, deserved it.

LAFEU.

Yes, good faith, every dram of it; and I will not bate thee a scruple.[10]

PAROLLES.

Well, I shall be wiser—

LAFEU.

Ev'n as soon as thou canst, for thou hast to pull at a smack

---

[1] **two ordinaries:** the space of two meals. [2] **make tolerable . . . travel:** give a fairly good account of your travels. [3] **scarfs and the bannerets:** ornaments hung from different parts of the attire. [4] **a vessel . . . burthen:** a ship of too great a cargo. [5] **found thee:** discovered what you are. [6] **taking up:** challenging. [7] **antiquity:** age. [8] **good window of lattice:** as transparent (easy to see through) as a latticed window, often used on alehouses. [9] **egregious:** one of Parolles' affected words. [10] **bate thee a scruple:** moderate my charges against you one mite.

o'th'contrary.[1] If ever thou be'st bound in thy scarf and beaten, thou shalt find what it is to be proud of thy bondage. I have a desire to hold my acquaintance with thee, or rather my knowledge, that I may say, in the default,[2] he is a man I know.

PAROLLES.

My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

LAFEU.

I would it were hell-pains for thy sake, and my poor doing eternal: for doing I am past; as I will by thee,[3] in what motion age will give me leave. [*Exit.*

PAROLLES.

Well, thou hast a son shall take this disgrace off me; scurvy, old, filthy, scurvy lord!—Well, I must be patient; there is no fettering of authority. I'll beat him, by my life, if I can meet him with any convenience,[4] an he were double and double a lord. I'll have no more pity of his age than I would have of :—I'll beat him, an if[5] I could but meet him again.

Enter LAFEU.

LAFEU.

Sirrah, your lord and master's married; there's news for you: you have a new mistress.

PAROLLES.

I most unfeignedly beseech your lordship to make some reservation of your wrongs:[6] he is my good lord;[7] whom I serve above is my master.

LAFEU.

Who? God?

---

[1] **thou hast to pull . . . contrary:** you have to be perverse. [2] **in the default:** when you fail to appear in court. [3] **as I will by thee:** as I shall pass by you. [4] **with any convenience:** at an advantage. [5] **an if:** if. [6] **make . . . wrongs:** be somewhat less outspoken with your insults. [7] **lord:** patron.

PAROLLES.

Ay, sir.

LAFEU.

The devil it is that's thy master. Why dost thou garter up thy arms o' [1] this fashion? dost make hose of thy sleeves? do other servants so? Thou wert best set thy lower part where thy nose stands. By mine honour, if I were but two hours younger, I'ld beat thee: methinks't, thou art a general offence, and every man should beat thee: I think thou wast created for men to breathe themselves upon thee.[2]

PAROLLES.

This is hard and undeserved measure, my lord.

LAFEU.

Go to, sir; you were beaten in Italy for picking a kernel out of a pomegranate;[3] you are a vagabond,[4] and no true traveller: you are more saucy with lords and honourable personages than the heraldry of your birth and virtue gives you commission.[5] You are not worth another word, else I'ld call you knave. I leave you. [*Exit.*

PAROLLES.

Good, very good; it is so then:—good, very good; let it be conceal'd [6] awhile.

Enter BERTRAM.

BERTRAM.

Undone,[7] and forfeited to cares for ever!

PAROLLES.

What's the matter, sweet-heart?

BERTRAM.

Although before the solemn priest I have sworn,

---

[1] **o'**: in. [2] **to breathe themselves upon thee**: to take their exercise on you. [3] **picking . . . pomegranate**: petty thievery. [4] **vagabond**: tramp. [5] **gives you commission**: *entitles you to be.* [6] **conceal'd**: kept quiet. [7] **Undone**: ruined.

I will not bed her.

PAROLLES.

What, what, sweet-heart?

BERTRAM.

O, my Parolles, they have married me!—
I'll to the Tuscan wars, and never bed her.

PAROLLES.

France is a dog-hole, and it no more[1] merits
The tread of a man's foot: to th'wars!

BERTRAM.

There's letters from my mother: what th'import is, I know not yet.

PAROLLES.

Ay, that would be known. To th'wars, my boy, to th' wars!
He wears his honour in a box unseen,
That hugs his kicky-wicky[2] here at home,
Spending his manly marrow in her arms,
Which should sustain the bound and high curvet[3]
Of Mars's fiery steed. To other regions!
France is a stable; we that dwell in't jades;[4]
Therefore, to th'wars!

BERTRAM.

It shall be so: I'll send her to my house,
Acquaint my mother with my hate to her,[5]
And wherefore[6] I am fled; write to the king
That which I durst not speak: his present gift
Shall furnish me to[7] those Italian fields,
Where noble fellows strike: war is no strife
To the dark house[8] and the detested wife.

PAROLLES.

Will this capriccio[9] hold in thee, art sure?

BERTRAM.

Go with me to my chamber, and advise me.

---

[1] **no more:** no longer. [2] **kicky-wicky:** ludicrous term for a wife. [3] **curvet:** graceful leap caper. [4] **jades:** broken-down horses. [5] **with my hate to her:** of my dislike for her. [6] **wherefore:** why. [7] **furnish me to:** equip me for. [8] **To the dark house:** compared to a house made gloomy by discontent. [9] **capriccio:** an affected word for a capricious whim.

I'll send her straight away:[1] to-morrow
I'll to the wars, she to her single[2] sorrow.

PAROLLES.

Why, these balls bound;[3] there's noise in it.—'Tis hard:[4]
A young man married is a man that's marr'd:[5]
Therefore, away, and leave her; bravely go:
The king has done you wrong; but, hush, 'tis so.[6] [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

Paris. The KING'S *palace.*

Enter HELENA *and* CLOWN.

HELENA.

My mother greets me kindly: is she well?

CLOWN.

She is not well; but yet she has her health: she's very merry; but yet she is not well: but thanks be given, she's very well, and wants nothing i'th'world; but yet she is not well.

HELENA.

If she be very well, what does she ail, that she's not very well?

CLOWN.

Truly, she's very well indeed, but for two things.

HELENA.

What two things?

CLOWN.

One, that she's not in heaven, whither God send her quickly! the other, that she's in earth, from whence God send her quickly!

Enter PAROLLES.

---

[1] **straight away:** away immediately. [2] **single:** state of singleness. [3] **these balls bound:** now you're talking sense; this sounds promising. [4] **hard:** this word applies both to *balls* and Bertram's present predicament. [5] **marr'd:** ruined. [6] **hush, 'tis so:** it's the truth, so let's not say any more about it.

PAROLLES.

Bless you, my fortunate lady!

HELENA.

I hope, sir, I have your good will [1] to have mine own good fortunes.

PAROLLES.

You had my prayers to lead them on; and to keep them on, have them still.[2]—O, my knave,—how does my old lady?

CLOWN.

So that[3] you had her wrinkles, and I her money, I would she did as you say.

PAROLLES.

Why, I say nothing.

CLOWN.

Marry, you are the wiser man; for many a man's tongue shakes out his master's undoing: to say nothing, to do nothing, to know nothing, and to have nothing, is to be a great part of your title;[4] which is within a very little of nothing.

PAROLLES.

Away! th'art a knave.

CLOWN.

You should have said, sir, before a knave th'art a knave; that's, before me[5] th'art a knave: this had been truth, sir.

PAROLLES.

Go to, thou art a witty fool; I have found thee.[6]

CLOWN.

Did you find me in yourself, sir? or were you taught to find me? The search, sir, was profitable; and much fool may you find in you, even to the world's pleasure and the increase of laughter.

---

[1] **good will:** good wishes.
[2] **still:** always.
[3] **So that:** *if.*
[4] **your title:** that is, Parolles' status as a servant.
[5] **before me:** on my word (as another knave).
[6] **found thee:** found you out.

PAROLLES.

A good knave, i'faith, and well fed.[1]—
Madam, my lord will go away to-night;
A very serious business calls on him.
The great prerogative and rite of love,
Which, as your due, time claims, he does acknowledge;
But puts it off by[2] a compell'd restraint;
Whose want, and whose delay, is strew'd with sweets,
Which they distil[3] now in the curbed time,[4]
To make the coming hour o'erflow with joy,
And pleasure drown the brim.

HELENA.

What's his will else?[5]

PAROLLES.

That you will take your instant leave o'th'king,
And make this haste as your own good proceeding,[6]
Strengthen'd with what apology you think
May make it probable need.[7]

HELENA.

What more commands he?

PAROLLES.

That, having this obtain'd,[8] you presently
Attend his[9] further pleasure.

HELENA.

In every thing I wait upon his will.

PAROLLES.

I shall report it so.

HELENA.

I pray you. [*Exit* PAROLLES.] Come, sirrah.
[*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **well fed:** "Better fed than taught"—*see* II, *ii.* [2] **puts it off by:** delays it because of. [3] **distil:** Parolles likens the delay to the process of perfume-making. [4] **curbed time:** *time of restraint (absence).* [5] **else:** besides this. [6] **make . . . proceeding:** inform the king that the decision to leave so quickly *is your own wish.* [7] **probable need:** a plausible necessity. [8] **this obtain'd:** that is, the king's permission for her to leave. [9] **Attend his:** *await Bertram's.*

Scene V.

Paris. The KING'S *palace.*

Enter LAFEU *and* BERTRAM.

LAFEU.

But I hope your lordship thinks not him a soldier.[1]

BERTRAM.

Yes, my lord, and of very valiant approof.[2]

LAFEU.

You have it from his own deliverance.

BERTRAM.

And by other warranted [3] testimony.

LAFEU.

Then my dial [4] goes not true: I took this lark for a bunting.[5]

BERTRAM.

I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in knowledge, and accordingly[6] valiant.

LAFEU.

I have, then, sinn'd against his experience, and transgrest against his valour; and my state that way is dangerous, since I cannot yet find in my heart to repent. Here he comes: I pray you, make us friends; I will pursue the amity.[7]

Enter PAROLLES.

PAROLLES [*to* BERTRAM].

These things shall be done, sir.

LAFEU.

Pray you, sir, who's his tailor? [8]

PAROLLES.

Sir?

---

[1] **thinks not him a soldier:** does not consider him (Parolles) good soldier material. [2] **of very valiant approof:** of proved valor under fire. [3] **warranted:** certified. [4] **dial:** watch. [5] **bunting:** a bird resembling a lark, but without a lark's sweet song. [6] **accordingly:** correspondingly. [7] **amity:** friendship. [8] **who's his tailor:** either Lafeu is inferring that Parolles is nothing but a tailor's dummy or he has switched the subject to throw Parolles off the track.

LAFEU.

O, I know him well, I, sir; he, sir, 's a good workman, a very good tailor.

BERTRAM [*aside to* PAROLLES].

Is she gone to the king?

PAROLLES [*aside to* BERTRAM].

She is.

BERTRAM [*aside to* PAROLLES].

Will she away to-night?

PAROLLES [*aside to* BERTRAM].

As you'll have her.

BERTRAM [*aside to* PAROLLES].

I've writ my letters, casketed my treasure,
Given order for our horses; and to-night,
When I should take possession of the bride,
End ere I do begin.

LAFEU.

A good traveller is something at the latter end of a dinner;[1] but one that lies three-thirds, and uses a known truth to pass a thousand nothings with, should be once heard, and thrice beaten.—God save you, captain.

BERTRAM.

Is there any unkindness between my lord and you, monsieur?

PAROLLES.

I know not how I have deserved to run into my lord's displeasure.

LAFEU.

You have made shift to run into't, boots and spurs and all, like him that leapt into the custard;[2] and out of it you'll run again, rather than suffer question for your residence.[3]

---

[1] **something at the latter end of a dinner:** that is, someone to tell tall tales.

[2] **him that leapt into the custard:** an allusion to the custom at banquets for the jester to leap into a large bowl of custard.

[3] **suffer question for your residence:** discuss your reasons for being there.

BERTRAM.

It may be you have mistaken him, my lord.

LAFEU.

And shall do so ever, though I took him at's prayers.[1] Fare you well, my lord; and believe this of me, there can be no kernel in this light nut; the soul of this man is his clothes: trust him not in matter of heavy consequence; I have kept of them tame,[2] and know their natures.—Farewell, monsieur: I have spoken better of you than you have worth or wit to deserve at my hand; but we must do good against evil.[3] [*Exit.*

PAROLLES.

An idle lord, I swear.

BERTRAM.

I think so.

PAROLLES.

Why, do you not know him?

BERTRAM.

Yes, I do know him well; and common speech
Gives him a worthy pass.—Here comes my clog.

Enter HELENA.

HELENA.

I have, sir, as I was commanded from you,
Spoke with the king, and have procured his leave
For present parting; only, he desires
Some private speech with you.

BERTRAM.

I shall obey his will.
You must not marvel, Helen, at my course,
Which holds not colour with the time,[5] nor does
The ministration and required office[6]
On my particular.[7] Prepared I was not

---

[1] **shall do so ever . . . prayers:** and shall always take him amiss (mistake him) even though I surprise (take) him at his prayers. [2] **I have . . . tame:** I have employed some of them as jesters in my own household. [3] **we must do good against evil:** *see* Thessalonians I, 5:15. [4] **clog:** *impediment;* a weight tied to an animal to restrict activity. [5] **holds . . . time:** is not in keeping with our wedding day. [6] **office:** duties as a husband. [7] **particular:** part.

For such a business; therefore am I found
So much unsettled: this drives me to entreat you,
That presently you take your way for home,
And rather muse[1] than ask why I entreat you;
For my respects[2] are better than they seem,
And my appointments have in them a need
Greater than shows itself,[3] at the first view,
To you that know them not. This to my mother:
[*Giving a letter.*
'Twill be two days ere I shall see you; so,
I leave you to your wisdom.

HELENA.

Sir, I can nothing say,
But that I am your most obedient servant.

BERTRAM.

Come, come, no more of that.

HELENA.

And ever shall
With true observance[4] seek to eke out[5] that
Wherein toward me my homely stars[6] have fail'd
To equal my good fortune.

BERTRAM.

Let that go:
My haste is very great: farewell, hie[7] home.

HELENA.

Pray, sir, your pardon.

BERTRAM.

Well, what would you say?

HELENA.

I am not worthy of the wealth I owe;[8]
Nor dare I say 'tis mine,—and yet it is;
But, like a timorous thief, most fain[9] would steal
What law does vouch mine own.

---

[1] **muse:** wonder; conjecture. [2] **respects:** reasons. [3] **shows itself:** appears. [4] **observance:** dedication; reverence. [5] **eke out:** compensate for. [6] **my homely stars:** the destiny which gave me humble birth. [7] **hie:** hurry. [8] **owe:** own. [9] **fain:** gladly; willingly.

BERTRAM.

What would you have?

HELENA.

Something; and scarce so much:—nothing, indeed.—
I would not tell you what I would, my lord:—
Faith, yes;—
Strangers and foes do sunder,[1] and not kiss.

BERTRAM.

I pray you, stay not, but in haste to horse.

HELENA.

I shall not break your bidding, good my lord.

BERTRAM.

Where are my other men, monsieur?—Farewell.

[*Exit* HELENA.

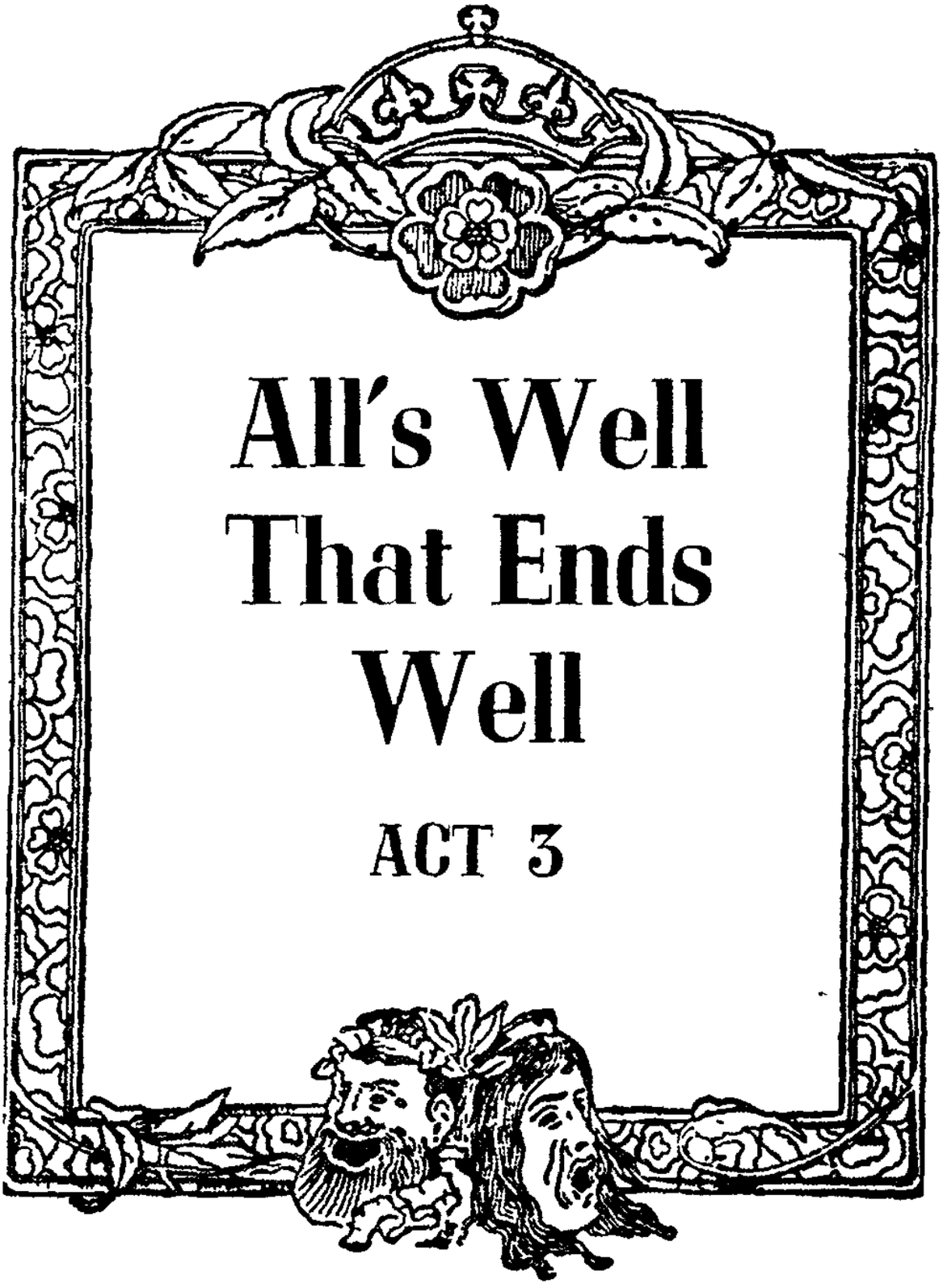
Go thou toward home; where I will never come,
Whilst I can shake my sword, or hear the drum.—
Away, and for our flight.

PAROLLES.

Bravely, coragio![2] [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **sunder:** part.
[2] **coragio:** courage (Italian).



All's Well That Ends Well

ACT 3

ACT III

THE CLOWN Lavache who has been acting as a messenger for the countess brings back from court a letter from Bertram telling her what has happened. Shortly afterwards Helena arrives with another letter from Bertram brought by the two French lords serving in Florence. Bertram says that he will never accept her as his wife until she gets possession of a ring which he never removes from his finger and until she produces his child—conditions which seem impossible of fulfillment. Helena decides to go to Florence as a pilgrim and there she meets the Widow Capilet and her daughter, Diana. When she learns that Bertram is trying to seduce Diana she proposes a plan which, if successful, can lead to her fulfilling Bertram's conditions. Diana is to pretend to agree to Bertram's solicitations on condition that he gives her his ring. At the assignation, however, Helena is to take Diana's place. Meanwhile the two French lords decide to amuse themselves by exposing Parolles as a liar and a coward and they invite Bertram to witness the discomfiture of his follower.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Florence. A room in the DUKE'S *palace.*

Flourish. Enter the DUKE OF FLORENCE, *two French* LORDS *and a troop of* SOLDIERS.

DUKE.

So that, from point to point,[1] now have you heard
The fundamental reasons of this war;
Whose great decision hath much blood let forth,
And more thirsts after.[2]

FIRST LORD.

Holy seems the quarrel
Upon your Grace's part; black and fearful
On the opposer.

DUKE.

Therefore we marvel much our cousin[3] France
Would, in so just a business, shut his bosom
Against our borrowing prayers.[4]

SECOND LORD.

Good my lord,
The reasons of our state I cannot yield,
But like a common and an outward man,
That the great figure of a council frames
By self-unable motion:[5] therefore dare not
Say what I think of it, since I have found
Myself in my incertain grounds to fail
As often as I guest.[6]

DUKE.

Be it his pleasure.

SECOND LORD.

But I am sure the younger of our nation,
That surfeit on their ease,[7] will day by day
Come here for physic.[8]

---

[1] **from point to point:** in detail. [2] **Whose great . . . after:** which *weighty decision has already caused much bloodshed and will cause much more.* [3] **cousin:** fellow sovereign. [4] **our borrowing prayers:** our requests for troops to assist us. [5] **The reasons . . . motion:** I cannot give you the reasons for my country's refusal except as a commander who can only use his poor reasoning powers to imagine what goes on in the council chamber. [6] **guest:** guessed. [7] **surfeit on their ease:** grown tired of idleness. [8] **physic:** the cure.

DUKE.

Welcome shall they be;
And all the honours that can fly from us
Shall on them settle. You know your places well;
When better fall, for your avails they fell:[1]
To-morrow to the field. [*Flourish. Exeunt.*

Scene II.

Rousillon. A room in the house of the COUNTESS.

Enter COUNTESS *and* CLOWN.

COUNTESS.

It hath happen'd all as I would have had it, save that he comes not along with her.

CLOWN.

By my troth, I take my young lord to be a very melancholy man.

COUNTESS.

By what observance, I pray you?

CLOWN.

Why, he will look upon his boot, and sing; mend the ruff, and sing; ask questions, and sing; pick his teeth, and sing. I know a man that had this trick of melancholy[2] sold a goodly manor for a song.

COUNTESS.

Let me see what he writes, and when he means[3] to come.
[*Opening a letter.*

CLOWN.

I have no mind to Isbel, since I was at court: our old ling[4] and our Isbels o'th'country are nothing like your old ling and your Isbels o'th' court: the brains of my Cupid's knockt out; and I begin to love, as an old man loves money, with no stomach.[5]

---

[1] **When better . . . fell:** when better places fall vacant, they will have done so for you to avail themselves of them.
[2] **trick of melancholy:** this touch of madness.
[3] **means:** intends.
[4] **ling:** salt cod; *salt:* lust, or lechery.
[5] **stomach:** appetite.

COUNTESS.

What have we here?

CLOWN.

E'en that you have there. [*Exit.*

COUNTESS [*reads*].

I have sent you a daughter-in-law: she hath recover'd the king, and undone me. I have wedded her, not bedded her; and sworn to make the 'not' [1] eternal. You shall hear I am run away: know it before the report come. If there be breadth enough in the world, I will hold a long distance. My duty to you. Your unfortunate son,

BERTRAM.

This is not well, rash and unbridled boy,
To fly[2] the favours of so good a king;
To pluck[3] his indignation on thy head
By the misprising of a maid too virtuous
For the contempt of empire.[4]

Enter CLOWN.

CLOWN.

O madam, yonder is heavy[5] news within between two soldiers and my young lady!

COUNTESS.

What is the matter?

CLOWN.

Nay, there is some comfort in the news, some comfort; your son will not be kill'd so soon as I thought he would.

COUNTESS.

Why should he be kill'd?

CLOWN.

So say I, madam, if he run away, as I hear he does: the danger is in standing to't; that's the loss of men, though it

---

[1] **'not'**: a pun on the marriage knot.
[2] **fly**: fly from; flaunt.
[3] **pluck**: bring down.
[4] **the contempt of empire**: an emperor's contempt.
[5] **heavy**: sorrowful.

be the getting of children. Here they come will tell you more: for my part, I only hear your son was run away.[1] [*Exit.*

Enter HELENA *and two* GENTLEMEN.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

Save you, good madam.

HELENA.

Madam, my lord is gone, for ever gone.

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

Do not say so.

COUNTESS.

Think upon patience.—Pray you, gentlemen,—
I have felt so many quirks of joy and grief,
That the first face of neither, on the start,[2]
Can woman me unto't:[3]—where is my son, I pray you?

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

Madam, he's gone to serve the Duke of Florence:
We met him thitherward;[4] for thence we came,
And, after some dispatch in hand [5] at court,
Thither we bend [6] again.

HELENA.

Look on his letter, madam; here's my passport.[7] [*Reads*] When thou canst get the ring upon my finger which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me husband: but in such a 'then' I write a 'never.'

This is a dreadful sentence.

COUNTESS.

Brought you this letter, gentlemen?

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

Ay, madam;
And, for the contents' sake, are sorry for our pains.

---

[1] **was run away:** has ran away. [2] **on the start:** when it appears unexpectedly. [3] **woman me unto't:** provoke a woman's tears. [4] **thitherward:** on his way there. [5] **some dispatch in hand:** the dispatching of some pressing business. [6] **bend:** bend our steps. [7] **passport:** sentence of death, or license to wander as a beggar.

COUNTESS.

I prithee, lady, have a better cheer;
If thou engrossest all the griefs are thine,
Thou robb'st me of a moiety:[2] he was my son;
But I do wash his name out of my blood,
And thou art all my child.[3]—Towards Florence is he?

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

Ay, madam.

COUNTESS.

And to be a soldier?

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

Such is his noble purpose: and, believe't,
The duke will lay upon him all the honour
That good convenience claims.[4]

COUNTESS.

Return you thither?

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

Ay, madam, with the swiftest wing of speed.

HELENA [*reads*].

'Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.'
'Tis bitter.

COUNTESS.

Find you that there?

HELENA.

Ay, madam.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

'Tis but the boldness of his hand, haply,[5] which his heart was not consenting to.

COUNTESS.

Nothing in France, until he have no wife!
There's nothing here that is too good for him,
But only she; and she deserves a lord,
That twenty such rude boys might tend upon,[6]
And call her hourly mistress.—Who was with him?

---

[1] **engrossest . . . thine:** monopolize all the sorrows as your own. [2] **moiety:** share. [3] **all my child:** my only child. [4] **That good convenience claims:** that Bertram can claim as appropriate for his deserts. [5] **haply:** perhaps. [6] **tend upon:** wait upon; serve.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

A servant only, and a gentleman
Which I have sometime[1] known.

COUNTESS.

Parolles, was't not?

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

Ay, my good lady, he.

COUNTESS.

A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness.
My son corrupts a well-derived nature
With his inducement.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

Indeed, good lady,
The fellow has a deal of that too much,
Which holds him much to have.[2]

COUNTESS.

Y'are welcome, gentlemen.
I will entreat you, when you see my son,
To tell him that his sword can never win
The honour that he loses: more I'll entreat you
Written to bear along.[3]

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

We serve you, madam,
In that and all your worthiest affairs.

COUNTESS.

Not so, but as we change our courtesies.[4]
Will you draw near?

[*Exeunt* COUNTESS *and* GENTLEMEN.

HELENA.

'Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.'
Nothing in France, until he has no wife!
Thou shalt have none, Rousillon, none in France;

---

[1] **sometime:** at one time.
[2] **The fellow . . . have:** he (Parolles) has too much of that kind of inducement, which he uses for his own advantage.
[3] **to bear along:** to take with you.
[4] **Not so . . . courtesies:** not unless I return the same service (politeness) to you.

Then hast thou all again. Poor lord! is't I
That chase thee from thy country, and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event[1]
Of the none-sparing war? and is it I
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky[2] muskets? O you leaden messengers,
That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
Fly with false aim; move the still-piecing[3] air,
That sings with piercing,[4] do not touch my lord!
Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;[5]
Whoever charges on his forward breast,
I am the caitiff [6] that do hold him to't;
And, though I kill him not, I am the cause
His death was so effected: better 'twere
I met the ravin[7] lion when he roar'd
With sharp constraint of hunger; better 'twere
That all the miseries which nature owes[8]
Were mine at once. No, come thou home, Rousillon,
Whence honour but of danger wins a scar,[9]
As oft it loses all: I will be gone;
My being here it is that holds thee hence:
Shall I stay here to do't? no, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house,
The angels officed all.[10] I will be gone,
That pitiful rumour may report my flight,
To consolate[11] thine ear. Come, night; end, day!
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away. [*Exit.*

---

[1] **event:** consequence, outcome [2] **smoky:** as a contrast to *fair.* [3] **still-piecing:** always closing. [4] **sings with piercing:** that is, the whine of the bullets makes the very air sing. [5] **set him there:** make him the target. [6] **caitiff:** miserable wretch. [7] **ravin:** ravenous. [8] **owes:** owns [9] **but of danger wins a scar:** wins only a scar in testimony of danger [10] **officed all:** performed all the domestic duties. [11] **consolate:** console

Scene III.

Florence. Before the DUKE's *palace.*

Flourish. Enter the DUKE OF FLORENCE, BERTRAM, PAROLLES, SOLDIERS, *Drum, and Trumpets.*

DUKE.

The general of our horse thou art; and we,
Great in our hope, lay[1] our best love and credence
Upon thy promising fortune.

BERTRAM.

Sir, it is
A charge too heavy for my strength; but yet
We'll strive to bear it, for your worthy sake,
To th'extreme edge of hazard.[2]

DUKE.

Then go thou forth;
And Fortune play upon thy prosperous helm,[3]
As thy auspicious mistress!

BERTRAM.

This very day,
Great Mars, I put myself into thy file:[4]
Make me but like my thoughts, and I shall prove
A lover of thy drum, hater of love. [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV.

Rousillon. A room in the house of the COUNTESS.

Enter COUNTESS *and* STEWARD.

COUNTESS.

Alas! and would you take the letter of her?
Might you not know she would do as she has done,
By sending me a letter? Read it again.

STEWARD [*reads*].

I am Saint Jaques' [5] pilgrim, thither gone:
Ambitious love hath so in me offended,
That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,
With sainted vow my faults to have amended.

---

[1] **lay:** wager.
[2] **To th'extreme edge of hazard:** to the death.
[3] **helm:** helmet.
[4] **file:** ranks.
[5] **Saint Jaques:** the shrine of Saint Jacques (St. James) at Compostella in Spain.

Write,[1] write, that from the bloody course of war
My dearest master, your dear son, may hiè:
Bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far
His name with zealous fervour sanctify:
His taken labours[2] bid him me forgive;
I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth
From courtly friends, with camping foes to live,
Where death and danger dogs the heels of worth:
He is too good and fair for death and me;
Whom[3] I myself embrace, to set him[4] free.

COUNTESS.

Ah, what sharp stings are in her mildest words!—
Rinaldo, you did never lack advice[5] so much,
As letting her pass so: had I spoke with her,
I could have well diverted her intents,[6]
Which thus she hath prevented.[7]

STEWARD.

Pardon me, madam:
If I had given you this at over-night,[8]
She might have been o'erta'en; and yet she writes,
Pursuit would be but vain.

COUNTESS.

What angel shall
Bless this unworthy husband? he cannot thrive,
Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear,
And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath
Of greatest justice.—Write, write, Rinaldo,
To this unworthy husband of his wife;[9]
Let every word weigh heavy of her worth,
That he does weigh[10] too light: my greatest grief,
Though little he do feel it, set down sharply.
Dispatch the most convenient messenger:—

---

[1] **Write:** write to your son. [2] **labours:** an allusion to the twelve labors of Hercules, imposed on him by his stepmother, Juno, the jealous wife of Jupiter. [3] **Whom:** i.e., death. [4] **him:** Bertram. [5] **advice:** discretion. [6] **intents:** intentions. [7] **prevented:** forestalled. [8] **at over-night:** last night. [9] **unworthy . . . wife:** husband unworthy of his wife. [10] **weigh:** value.

When haply he shall hear that she is gone,
He will return; and hope I may that she,
Hearing so much, will speed her foot again,
Led hither by pure love: which of them both
Is dearest to me, I have no skill in sense
To make distinction:—provide this messenger:—
My heart is heavy and mine age is weak:
Grief would have tears, and sorrow bids me speak. [*Exeunt.*

Scene V.

Without the walls of Florence. A tucket[1] *afar off.*

Enter an old WIDOW *of Florence,* DIANA, VIOLENTA, MARIANA, *with other* CITIZENS.

WIDOW.

Nay, come; for if they do approach the city, we shall lose all the sight.

DIANA.

They say the French count has done most honourable service.

WIDOW.

It is reported that he has taken their greatest commander; and that with his own hand he slew the duke's brother. [*Tucket.*] We have lost our labour; they are gone a contrary[2] way: hark! you may know by their trumpets.

MARIANA.

Come, let's return again, and suffice ourselves with the report of it. Well, Diana, take heed of this French earl: the honour of a maid is her name; and no legacy is so rich as honesty.[3]

WIDOW.

I have told my neighbour how you have been solicited by a gentleman his companion.

---

[1] ***tucket***: trumpet call.
[2] **a contrary**: another.
[3] **honesty**: honor.

MARIANA.

I know that knave; hang him! one Parolles: a filthy officer[1] he is in those suggestions for the young earl.[2]—Beware of them, Diana; their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust, are not the things they go under: many a maid hath been seduced by them; and the misery is, example, that so terrible shows in the wrack of maidenhood, cannot for all that dissuade succession,[3] but that they are limed with the twigs that threaten them.[4] I hope I need not to advise you further; but I hope your own grace will keep you where you are, though there were no further danger known but the modesty which is so lost.

DIANA.

You shall not need to fear me.[5]

WIDOW.

I hope so.—Look, here comes a pilgrim: I know she will lie at my house; thither they send one another: I'll question her.

Enter HELENA, *in the dress of a pilgrim.*

God save you, pilgrim! whither are you bound?

HELENA.

To Saint Jaques le Grand.
Where do the palmers[6] lodge, I do beseech you?

WIDOW.

At the Saint Francis[7] here, beside the port.[8]

HELENA.

Is this the way?

WIDOW.

Ay marry, is't.—Hark you! they come this way.—
[*A march afar off.*

---

[1] **filthy officer:** foul agent. [2] **in those suggestions for the young earl:** to tempt you on behalf of the young earl. [3] **dissuade succession:** prevent other girls from following in her footsteps. [4] **limed . . . them:** caught with birdlime, like a bird in a snare. [5] **fear me:** fear for me. [6] **palmers:** pilgrims. [7] **At the Saint Francis:** at the inn with the sign of St. Francis. [8] **port:** gate.

If you will tarry, holy pilgrim,
But till the troops come by,
I will conduct you where you shall be lodged;
The rather, for I think I know your hostess
As ample[1] as myself.

HELENA.

Is it yourself?

WIDOW.

If you shall please so, pilgrim.

HELENA.

I thank you, and will stay upon your leisure.

WIDOW.

You came, I think, from France?

HELENA.

I did so.

WIDOW.

Here you shall see a countryman of yours
That has done worthy service.

HELENA.

His name, I pray you.

DIANA.

The Count Rousillon: know you such a one?

HELENA.

But by the ear, that hears most nobly of him:
His face I know not.

DIANA.

Whatsome'er he is,
He's bravely taken here.[2] He stole[3] from France,
As 'tis reported, for the king had married him
Against his liking: think you it is so?

HELENA.

Ay, surely, mere the truth:[4] I know his lady.

---

[1] **ample:** well.
[2] **He's bravely taken here:** he has made a fine impression here.
[3] **stole:** fled.
[4] **mere the truth:** it is absolutely true.

DIANA.

There is a gentleman that serves the count
Reports but coarsely[1] of her.

HELENA.

What's his name?

DIANA.

Monsieur Parolles.

HELENA.

O, I believe with him,
In argument of praise, or to the worth
Of the great count himself,[2] she is too mean[3]
To have her name repeated: all her deserving[4]
Is a reserved honesty,[5] and that
I have not heard examined.[6]

DIANA.

Alas, poor lady!
'Tis a hard bondage to become the wife
Of a detesting lord.

WIDOW.

I write good creature; wheresoe'er she is,
Her heart weighs sadly: this young maid might do her
A shrewd turn,[7] if she pleased.

HELENA.

How do you mean?
May be the amorous count solicits her
In the unlawful purpose.

WIDOW.

He does indeed;
And brokes[8] with all that can in such a suit
Corrupt the tender honour of a maid:
But she is arm'd for him, and keeps her guard
In honestest defence.

---

[1] **coarsely:** rudely. [2] **In argument . . . himself:** if we are going to speak in her praise, or compare her worth with that of the count. [3] **too mean:** too low in rank. [4] **all her deserving:** her only virtue. [5] **a reserved honesty:** her preserved chastity. [6] **examined:** questioned. [7] **shrewd turn:** bad trick. [8] **brokes:** bargains.

MARIANA.

The gods forbid else!

WIDOW.

So, now they come:—

Drum and Colours.

Enter BERTRAM, PAROLLES, *and the whole army.*

That is Antonio, the duke's eldest son;
That, Escalus.

HELENA.

Which is the Frenchman?

DIANA.

He;
That with the plume: 'tis a most gallant fellow.
I would he loved his wife: if he were honester,[1]
He were much goodlier: is't not a handsome gentleman?

HELENA.

I like him well.

DIANA.

'Tis pity he is not honest: yond's that same knave
That leads him to these passes:[2] were I his lady,
I would poison that vile rascal.

HELENA.

Which is he?

DIANA.

That jack-an-apes[3] with scarfs: why is he melancholy?

HELENA.

Perchance he's hurt i'the battle.

PAROLLES.

Lose our drum! well.

---

[1] **honester:** more honorable.
[2] **leads him to these passes:** eggs him on to make these advances.
[3] **jack-an-apes:** jackanapes; monkey; literally, a Jack (monkey or ape) from Naples, Italy.

MARIANA.

He's shrewdly[1] vext at something: look, he has spied us.

WIDOW.

Marry, hang you!

MARIANA.

And your courtesy, for a ring-carrier! [2]

[*Exeunt* BERTRAM, PAROLLES, *&c.*

WIDOW.

The troop is past. Come pilgrim, I will bring you
Where you shall host:[3] of enjoin'd penitents[4]
There's four or five, to Great Saint Jaques bound,
Already at my house.

HELENA.

I humbly thank you:
Please it this matron and this gentle maid
To eat with us to-night, the charge and thanking[5]
Shall be for me; and, to requite[6] you further,
I will bestow some precepts of [7] this virgin
Worthy the note.[8]

BOTH.

We'll take your offer kindly. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

Camp before Florence.

Enter BERTRAM *and the two French* LORDS.

FIRST LORD.

Nay, good my lord, put him to't;[9] let him have his way.

SECOND LORD.

If your lordship find him not a hilding,[10] hold me no more in your respect.

---

[1] **shrewdly:** highly. [2] **ring-carrier:** go-between; pander. [3] **host:** lodge. [4] **enjoin'd penitents:** persons bound by oath to make a pilgrimage in penance for their sins. [5] **charge and thanking:** the cost and gratitude. [6] **requite:** reward. [7] **of:** on. [8] **Worthy the note:** worth noting. [9] **to't:** to the test. [10] **hilding:** coward.

FIRST LORD.

On my life, my lord, a bubble.[1]

BERTRAM.

Do you think I am so far deceived in him?

FIRST LORD.

Believe it, my lord, in mine own direct knowledge, without any malice, but to speak of him as my kinsman,[2] he's a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise-breaker, the owner of no one good quality worthy your lordship's entertainment.[3]

SECOND LORD.

It were fit you knew him; lest, reposing too far in his virtue, which he hath not, he might at some great and trusty business, in a main danger,[4] fail you.

BERTRAM.

I would I knew in what particular action to try him.

SECOND LORD.

None better than to let him fetch off[5] his drum, which you hear him so confidently undertake to do.

FIRST LORD.

I, with a troop of Florentines, will suddenly surprise him; such I will have, whom, I am sure, he knows not from the enemy: we will bind and hoodwink him so, that he shall suppose no other but that he is carried into the leaguer[6] of the adversaries, when we bring him to our own tents. Be but your lordship present at his examination: if he do not, for the promise of his life, and in the highest compulsion of base fear, offer to betray you, and deliver all the intelligence[7]

---

[1] **a bubble:** a sham. [2] **as my kinsman:** with the same partiality that I would show him if he were a relation of mine. [3] **entertainment:** service; pay. [4] **in a main danger:** in a time of great danger; in a crisis. [5] **fetch off:** rescue. [6] **leaguer:** *leger*—Dutch word for camp. [7] **intelligence:** information.

in his power against you, and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon oath, never trust my judgement in any thing.

SECOND LORD.

O, for the love of laughter, let him fetch off his drum; he says he has a stratagem[1] for't: when your lordship sees the bottom of his success in't, and to what metal this counterfeit lump of ore will be melted, if you give him not John Drum's entertainment,[2] your inclining cannot be removed.—Here he comes.

FIRST LORD.

O, for the love of laughter, hinder not the humour of his design: let him fetch off his drum in any hand.[3]

Enter PAROLLES.

BERTRAM.

How now, monsieur! this drum sticks sorely in your disposition.

SECOND LORD.

A pox on't,[4] let it go; 'tis but a drum.

PAROLLES.

But a drum! is't but a drum? A drum so lost!—There was excellent command,—to charge in with our horse upon our own wings,[5] and to rend our own soldiers!

SECOND LORD.

That was not to be blamed in the command of the service: it was a disaster of war that Cæsar himself could not have prevented, if he had been there to command.

BERTRAM.

Well, we cannot greatly condemn our success: some dis-

---

[1] **stratagem:** plan. [2] **John Drum's entertainment:** in *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, Jack Drum is a servant who is always being baffled by tricks being played on him. [3] **in any hand:** in any case. [4] **A pox on't:** a plague on it (mild oath). [5] **wings:** flanks.

honour we had in the loss of that drum; but it is not to be recover'd.

PAROLLES.

It might have been recover'd.

BERTRAM.

It might; but it is not now.

PAROLLES.

It is to be recover'd: but that the merit of service is seldom attributed to the true and exact performer, I would have that drum or another, or *hic jacet*.[1]

BERTRAM.

Why, if you have a stomach, to't:[2] monsieur, if you think your mystery[3] in stratagem can bring this instrument of honour again into his native quarter, be magnanimous[4] in the enterprise, and go on; I will grace[5] the attempt for a worthy exploit: if you speed well in it, the duke shall both speak of it, and extend to you what further becomes his greatness, even to the utmost syllable of your worthiness.

PAROLLES.

By the hand of a soldier, I will undertake it.

BERTRAM.

But you must not now slumber in it.

PAROLLES.

I'll about it this evening: and I will presently pen down my dilemmas,[6] encourage myself in my certainty, put myself in my mortal preparation;[7] and, by midnight, look to hear further from me.

BERTRAM.

May I be bold to acquaint his Grace you are gone about it?

---

[1] **or *hic jacet*:** *hic jacet* is the beginning of an epitaph, meaning "here lies"; hence, or die in the attempt. [2] **a stomach, to't:** the courage, go to it. [3] **mystery:** art or craft. [4] **magnanimous:** greathearted. [5] **grace:** honor. [6] **dilemmas:** perplexing problems. [7] **put myself . . . preparation:** prepare myself for death.

PAROLLES.

I know not what the success will be, my lord; but the attempt I vow.

BERTRAM.

I know th'art valiant; and, to the possibility[1] of thy soldier-ship, will subscribe[2] for thee. Farewell.

PAROLLES.

I love not many words. [*Exit.*

FIRST LORD.

No more than a fish loves water.—Is not this a strange fellow, my lord, that so confidently seems to undertake this business, which he knows is not to be done; damns himself to do, and dares better be damn'd than to do't?

SECOND LORD.

You do not know him, my lord, as we do: certain it is, that he will steal himself into a man's favour, and for a week escape a great deal of discoveries; but when you find him out, you have him ever after.

BERTRAM.

Why, do you think he will make no deed at all of this, that so seriously he does address himself unto?

FIRST LORD.

None in the world; but return with an invention,[3] and clap upon you two or three probable lies: but we have almost embost him,[4]—you shall see his fall to-night; for indeed he is not for your lordship's respect.

SECOND LORD.

We'll make you some sport with the fox, ere we case[5] him. He was first smoked[6] by the old Lord Lafeu: when his disguise and he is parted, tell me what a sprat[7] you shall

---

[1] **possibility**: capacity; potentiality. [2] **subscribe**: vouch. [3] **invention**: trumped-up excuse. [4] **embost him**: driven him to extremity (a term used in deer hunting). [5] **case**: skin; expose. [6] **smoked**: scented; suspected. [7] **sprat**: worthless fellow.

find him: which you shall see this very night.

FIRST LORD.

I must go look[1] my twigs:[2] he shall be caught.

BERTRAM.

Your brother, he shall go along with me.

FIRST LORD.

As't please your lordship: I'll leave you. [*Exit.*

BERTRAM.

Now will I lead you to the house, and show you
The lass I spoke of.

SECOND LORD.

But you say she's honest.

BERTRAM.

That's all the fault: I spoke with her but once,
And found her wondrous cold; but I sent to her,
By this same coxcomb[3] that we have i'the wind,[4]
Tokens and letters which she did re-send;[5]
And this is all I have done. She's a fair creature:
Will you go see her?

SECOND LORD.

With all my heart, my lord. [*Exeunt.*

Scene VII.

Florence. A room in the WIDOW'S *house.*

Enter HELENA *and* WIDOW.

HELENA.

If you misdoubt me[6] that I am not she,
I know not how I shall assure you further,
But I shall lose the grounds I work upon.[7]

WIDOW.

Though my estate be fall'n, I was well born,
Nothing acquainted with these businesses:

---

[1] **look:** see about. [2] **twigs:** that is, the twigs to smear with birdlime. [3] **coxcomb:** fool; jester. [4] **have i'the wind:** have the wind of; have the advantage of. [5] **re-send:** return. [6] **misdoubt me:** doubt; suspect. [7] **the grounds I work upon:** that is, her concealment from Bertram, which is necessary if her scheme is to work.

And would not put my reputation now
In any staining[1] act.

HELENA.

Nor would I wish you.
First, give me trust, the count he is my husband,
And what to your sworn counsel [2] I have spoken
Is so from word to word;[3] and then you cannot,
By the good aid that I of you shall borrow,
Err in bestowing it.

WIDOW.

I should believe you;
For you have show'd me that which well approves[4]
Y'are great in fortune.

HELENA.

Take this purse of gold,
And let me buy your friendly help thus far,
Which I will over-pay and pay again,
When I have found it. The count he woos your daughter,
Lays down his wanton siege before her beauty,
Resolved to carry her:[5] let her, in fine,[6] consent,
As we'll direct her how 'tis best to bear it;
Now his impatient blood will naught deny
That she'll demand: a ring the county[7] wears,
That downward hath succeeded in his house
From son to son, some four or five descents
Since the first father wore it: this ring he holds
In most rich choice;[8] yet, in his idle fire,[9]
To buy his will, it would not seem too dear,[10]
Howe'er repented after.

WIDOW.

Now I see
The bottom[11] of your purpose.

---

[1] **staining:** shameful. [2] **to your sworn counsel:** "To your private knowledge, after having required from you an oath of secrecy"—Johnson. [3] **Is so from word to word:** every word of it is true. [4] **approves:** proves. [5] **to carry her:** to win (as a fortress is besieged and taken). [6] **in fine:** in short. [7] **county:** count. [8] **In most rich choice:** his dearest treasure. [9] **idle fire:** reckless passion. [10] **too dear:** at too great cost. [11] **bottom:** core.

HELENA.

You see it lawful, then: it is no more,
But that your daughter, ere she seems as won,
Desires this ring; appoints him an encounter;
In fine, delivers me to fill the time,
Herself most chastely absent: after this,
To marry her,[1] I'll add three thousand crowns
To what is past already.

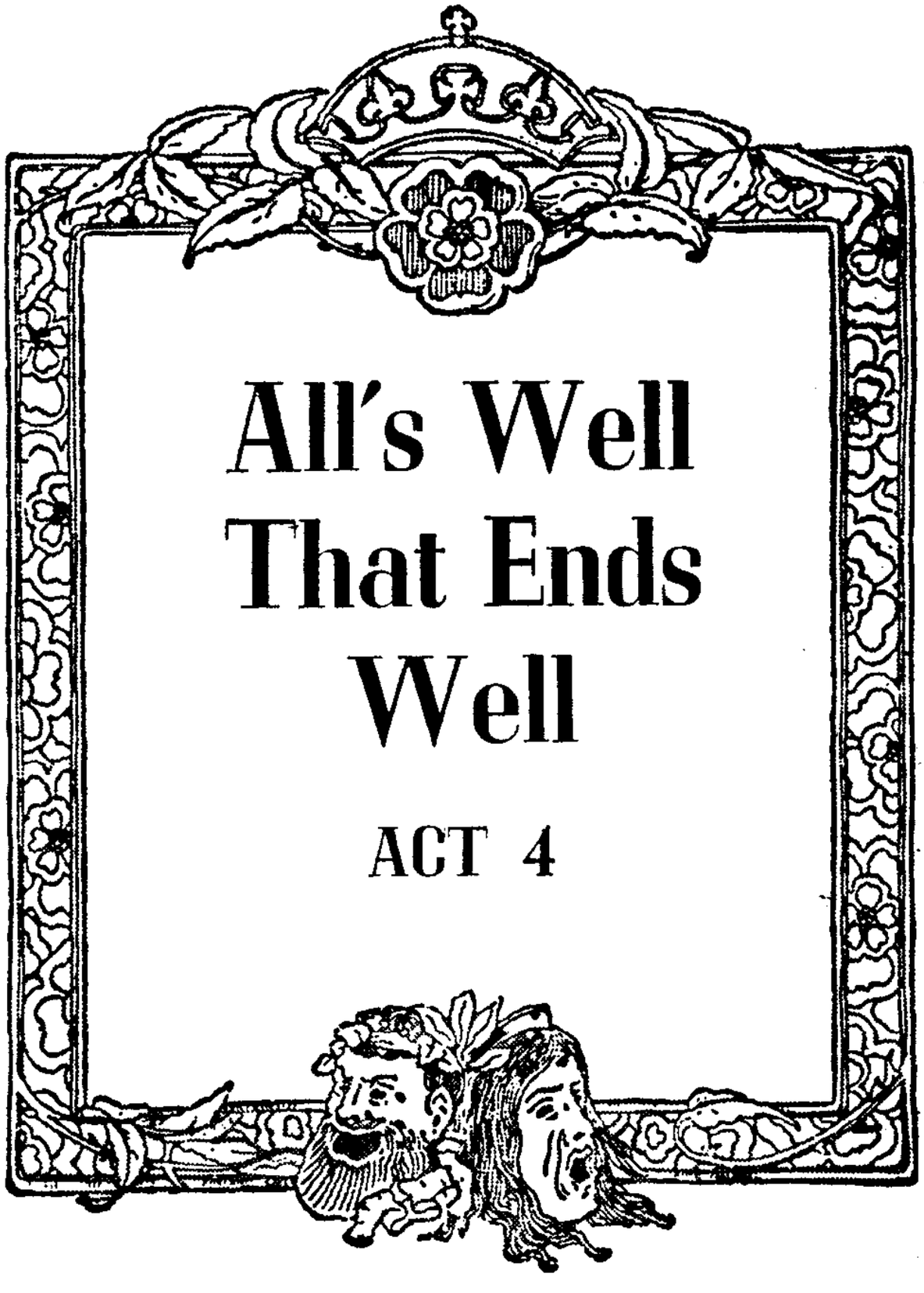
WIDOW.

I have yielded:
Instruct my daughter how she shall persever,[2]
That time and place with this deceit so lawful
May prove coherent. Every night he comes
With music of all sorts and songs composed
To her unworthiness:[3] it nothing steads[4] us
To chide him from our eaves;[5] for he persists,
As if his life lay on't.[6]

HELENA.

Why, then, to-night
Let us assay our plot; which, if it speed,[7]
Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed,
And lawful meaning in unlawful act;[8]
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact:
But let's about it. [*Exeunt.*

[1] **To marry her:** as a dowry. [2] **persever:** conduct herself. [3] **To her unworthiness:** to appeal to the worst side of her nature. [4] **steads:** avails. [5] **To chide . . . eaves:** to drive him away from our home. [6] **lay on't:** depended upon it. [7] **speed:** succeeds. [8] **Is wicked . . . act:** that is, Bertram is to perform a lawful deed with wicked intent, while Helen does the same deed with good intentions.



All's Well That Ends Well

ACT 4

ACT IV

PAROLLES is ambushed by the French lords and their companions and is blindfolded. Believing himself to be in enemy hands he promises to turn informer and betray his friends. Bertram meanwhile makes an assignation with Diana and gives her his ring. She promises to give Bertram her own ring (in reality, Helena's) when they are in bed together. His conduct is regarded as reprehensible by the two French lords, one of whom announces that Helena has died of grief. Bertram, however, is very satisfied with the turn of events. He is ready to go back home with letters from the Duke of Florence to the King, praising his bravery; he has seduced Diana and his wife is dead. Confronted with the true character of Parolles he is contemptuous rather than dismayed. Back in Rousillon Lafeu tells the countess that Helena is dead and Bertram is to come home to marry his daughter. The King has forgiven the young man and is himself coming to Rousillon. Meanwhile, Helena arranges with the Widow Capilet and Diana that they should all three go to the royal court now at Marseilles where she plans to confront her husband.

ACT IV. Scene I.

Without the Florentine camp.

Enter First French LORD, *with five or six other* SOLDIERS, *in ambush.*

FIRST LORD.

He can come no other way but by this hedge-corner. When you sally upon him, speak what terrible language you will,—though you understand it not yourselves, no matter; for we must not seem to understand him, unless some one among us, whom we must produce for an interpreter.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Good captain, let me be th'interpreter.

FIRST LORD.

Art not acquainted with him? knows he not thy voice?

FIRST SOLDIER.

No, sir, I warrant you.

FIRST LORD.

But what linsey-woolsey[1] hast thou to speak to us again?

FIRST SOLDIER.

E'en such as you speak to me.

FIRST LORD.

He must think us some band of strangers i'the adversary's entertainment.[2] Now, he hath a smack[3] of all neighbouring languages; therefore we must every one be a man of his own fancy,[4] not to know what we speak one to another; so we seem to know, is to know straight our purpose:[5] choughs' language,[6] gabble enough, and good enough. As for you, interpreter, you must seem very politic.[7]—But couch,[8] ho! here he comes,—to beguile two hours in a sleep, and then to return and swear the lies he forges.

Enter PAROLLES.

PAROLLES.

Ten o'clock: within these three hours 'twill be time enough to go home. What shall I say I have done? It must be a very plausive invention[9] that carries it: they begin to smoke me;[10] and disgraces have of late knockt too often at my door. I find my tongue is too foolhardy; but my heart hath the fear of

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[1] **linsey-woolsey:** medley of words; nonsense. [2] **adversary's entertainment:** enemies' employ. [3] **smack:** *smidgen.* [4] **be a man of his own fancy:** have his own jargon. [5] **so we . . . purpose:** if we appear to understand one another, it will be sufficient for our purpose. [6] **choughs' language:** the chatter of jackdaws. [7] **politic:** crafty. [8] **couch:** conceal yourselves. [9] **plausive invention:** plausible lie. [10] **smoke me:** see through me; suspect me.

Mars before it and of his creatures, not daring the reports of my tongue.

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

This is the first truth that e'er thine own tongue was guilty of.

PAROLLES.

What the devil should move me to undertake the recovery of this drum, being not ignorant of the impossibility, and knowing I had no such purpose? I must give myself some hurts,[1] and say I got them in exploit: yet slight ones will not carry it; they will say, 'Came you off with so little?' and great ones I dare not give. Wherefore, what's the instance? [2] Tongue, I must put you into a butter-woman's[3] mouth, and buy myself another of Bajazet's mule,[4] if you prattle me into these perils.

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

Is it possible he should know what he is, and be that he is?

PAROLLES.

I would the cutting of my garments would serve the turn, or the breaking of my Spanish sword.

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

We cannot afford you so.[5]

PAROLLES.

Or the baring[6] of my beard; and to say it was in stratagem.

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

'Twould not do.

PAROLLES.

Or to drown my clothes, and say I was stript—

---

[1] **hurts:** wounds. [2] **instance:** proof. [3] **a butter-woman:** a scold. [4] **Bajazet's mule:** Bajazet is the Turkish sultan in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*; or perhaps *Bajazet's* is a blunder for Balaam's. [5] **afford you so:** let you off at so little cost. [6] **baring:** shaving.

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

Hardly serve.

PAROLLES.

Though I swore I leapt from the window of the citadel—

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

How deep?

PAROLLES.

Thirty fadom.[1]

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

Three great oaths would scarce make that be believed.

PAROLLES.

I would I had any drum of the enemy's: I would swear I recover'd it.

FIRST LORD [*aside*].

You shall hear one anon. [*Alarum within.*

PAROLLES.

A drum now of the enemy's!

FIRST LORD.

Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.

ALL.

Cargo, cargo, cargo, villianda par corbo, cargo.

PAROLLES.

O, ransom, ransom!—do not hide mine eyes.

[*They seize and blindfold him.*

FIRST SOLDIER.

Boskos thromuldo boskos.

PAROLLES.

I know you are the Muskos' [2] regiment;
And I shall lose my life for want of language:[3]
If there be here German, or Dane, low Dutch,
Italian, or French, let him speak to me; I'll

---

[1] **fadom:** fathoms.
[2] **Muskos':** Muscovites'.
[3] **for want of language:** because I do not know the language.

Discover that which shall undo the Florentine.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Boskos vauvado:—
I understand thee, and can speak thy tongue:—
Kerelybonto:—sir,
Betake thee to thy faith,[1] for seventeen poniards
Are at thy bosom.

PAROLLES.

O!

FIRST SOLDIER.

O, pray, pray, pray!—
Manka revania dulche.

FIRST LORD.

Oscorbidulchos volivorco.

FIRST SOLDIER.

The general is content to spare thee yet;
And, hoodwinkt[2] as thou art, will lead thee on
To gather[3] from thee: haply[4] thou mayst inform
Something to save thy life.

PAROLLES.

O, let me live!
And all the secrets of our camp I'll show,
Their force, their purposes; nay, I'll speak that
Which you will wonder at.

FIRST SOLDIER.

But wilt thou faithfully?

PAROLLES.

If I do not, damn me.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Acordo linta:—
Come on; thou art granted space.[5]

[*Exit, with* PAROLLES *guarded. A short alarum within.*

---

[1] **faith:** *religion.*
[2] **hoodwinkt:** blindfolded.
[3] **gather:** obtain information.
[4] **haply:** perhaps.
[5] **space:** time; a reprieve.

FIRST LORD.

Go, tell the Count Rousillon, and my brother,
We have caught the woodcock,[1] and will keep him muffled [2]
Till we do hear from them.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Captain, I will.

FIRST LORD.

A' [3] will betray us all unto ourselves:—
Inform 'em that.

SECOND SOLDIER.

So I will, sir.

FIRST LORD.

Till then I'll keep him dark and safely lockt. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

Florence. A room in the WIDOW'S *house.*

Enter BERTRAM *and* DIANA.

They told me that your name was Fontibell.

DIANA.

No, my good lord, Diana.

BERTRAM.

Titled goddess;[4]
And worth it, with addition! [5] But, fair soul,
In your fine frame hath love no quality? [6]
If the quick fire of youth light not your mind,
You are no maiden, but a monument:[7]
When you are dead, you should be such a one
As you are now, for you are cold and stern;
And now you should be as your mother was

---

[1] **woodcock:** brainless fellow; fool. [2] **muffled:** blindfolded. [3] **A':** he. [4] **Titled goddess:** goddess with a title. [5] **with addition:** with additional titles. [6] **quality:** excellence; standing. [7] **monument:** statue.

When your sweet self was got.[1]

DIANA.

She then was honest.[2]

BERTRAM.

So should [3] you be.

DIANA.

No:

My mother did but duty; such, my lord,
As you owe to your wife.

BERTRAM.

No more o'that,—
I prithee, do not strive against my vows:
I was compell'd to her;[4] but I love thee
By love's own sweet constraint,[5] and will for ever
Do thee all rights of service.

DIANA.

Ay, so you serve us
Till we serve you; but when you have our roses,
You barely[6] leave our thorns to prick ourselves,
And mock us with our bareness.

BERTRAM.

How have I sworn!

DIANA.

'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth,
But the plain single vow that is vow'd true.
What is not holy, that we swear not by,
But take the High'st to witness: then, pray you, tell me,
If I should swear by Jove's great attributes,
I loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths,
When I did love you ill? [7] this has no holding,[8]
To swear by him whom I protest to love,

---

[1] **got:** begotten. [2] **honest:** i.e., married. [3] **should:** would. [4] **compell'd to her:** forced to marry her. [5] **constraint:** compulsion. [6] **barely:** merely. [7] **ill:** sinfully. [8] **holding:** *binding force*; consistency.

That I will work against him. Therefore your oaths
Are words and poor conditions; but unseal'd;[1]
At least in my opinion.

BERTRAM.

Change it, change it;
Be not so holy-cruel:[2] love is holy;
And my integrity ne'er knew the crafts[3]
That you do charge men with. Stand no more off,
But give thyself unto my sick[4] desires,
Who[5] then recover: say thou art mine, and ever
My love as it begins shall so persever.

DIANA.

I see that men make ropes in such a scarr,[6]
That we'll forsake ourselves. Give me that ring.

BERTAM.

I'll lend it thee, my dear; but have no power
To give it from me.

DIANA.

Will you not, my lord?

BERTRAM.

It is an honour 'longing[7] to our house,
Bequeathed down from many ancestors;
Which were the greatest obloquy i'the world
In me to lose.

DIANA.

Mine honour's such a ring:
My chastity's the jewel of our house,
Bequeathed down from many ancestors;
Which were the greatest obloquy i'the world
In me to lose: thus your own proper[8] wisdom
Brings in the champion honour on my part,[9]
Against your vain assault.

---

[1] **unseal'd:** without a seal (and therefore illegal). [2] **holy-cruel:** cruel in the name of holiness. [3] **crafts:** *deceits.* [4] **sick:** lovesick. [5] **Who:** which. [6] **scarr:** snare (?). [7] **'longing:** belonging. [8] **proper:** personal. [9] **on my part:** on my behalf.

BERTRAM.

Here, take my ring:
My house, mine honour, yea, my life, be thine,
And I'll be bid by thee.

DIANA.

When midnight comes, knock at my chamber-window:
I'll order take my mother shall not hear.
Now will I charge you in the band [1] of truth,
When you have conquer'd my yet maiden bed,
Remain there but an hour, nor speak to me:
My reasons are most strong; and you shall know them
When back again this ring shall be deliver'd:
And on your finger, in the night, I'll put
Another ring, that what in time proceeds[2]
May token[3] to the future our past deeds.
Adieu, till then; then fail not. You have won
A wife of me, though there my hope be done.[4]

BERTRAM.

A heaven on earth I have won by wooing thee. [*Exit.*

DIANA.

For which live long to thank both heaven and me!
You may so in the end.—
My mother told me just how he would woo,
As if she sat in's[5] heart; she says all men
Have the like oaths:[6] he has sworn to marry me
When his wife's dead; therefore I'll lie with him
When I am buried. Since Frenchmen are so braid,[7]
Marry that will,[8] I live and die a maid:
Only, in this disguise, I think't no sin
To cozen[9] him that would unjustly[10] win. [*Exit.*

---

[1] **band:** bond. [2] **what . . . proceeds:** whatever happens in the future. [3] **token:** bear witness. [4] **there . . . done:** my hope of winning you is over. [5] **in's:** in his. [6] **like oaths:** the same vows (of love). [7] **braid:** the Anglo-Saxon word *bred;* false. [8] **that will:** those that will. [9] **cozen:** cheat; swindle. [10] **unjustly:** dishonestly.

Scene III.

The Florentine camp.

Enter the two French LORDS *and some two or three* SOLDIERS.

FIRST LORD.

You have not given him his mother's letter?

SECOND LORD.

I have deliver'd it an hour since: there is something in't that stings his nature; for, on the reading it, he changed almost into another man.

FIRST LORD.

He has much worthy[1] blame laid upon him for shaking off so good a wife and so sweet a lady.

SECOND LORD.

Especially he hath incurr'd the everlasting displeasure of the king, who had even tuned his bounty to sing happiness to him. I will tell you a thing, but you shall let it dwell darkly[2] with you.

FIRST LORD.

When you have spoken it, 'tis dead, and I am the grave of it.

SECOND LORD.

He hath perverted a young gentlewoman here in Florence, of a most chaste renown; and this night he fleshes[3] his will in the spoil of her honour: he hath given her his monumental[4] ring, and thinks himself made in the unchaste composition.[5]

FIRST LORD.

Now, God delay our rebellion! [6] as we are ourselves, what things are we!

SECOND LORD.

Merely our own traitors.[7] And as in the common course of

---

[1] **worthy:** well-deserved. [2] **darkly:** in the dark; secretly. [3] **fleshes:** gratifies. [4] **monumental:** family heirloom. [5] **composition:** compact; bargain. [6] **God delay our rebellion:** God make us slow to yield to sin. [7] **Merely . . . traitors:** absolutely traitors to ourselves.

all treasons, we still[1] see them reveal themselves, till they attain to their abhorr'd ends,[2] so he that in this action contrives against his own nobility, in his proper stream o'erflows himself.[3]

FIRST LORD.

Is it not meant damnable in us,[4] to be trumpeters of our unlawful intents? We shall not, then, have his company to-night?

SECOND LORD.

Not till after midnight; for he is dieted to his hour.[5]

FIRST LORD.

That approaches apace: I would gladly have him see his company[6] anatomized,[7] that he might take a measure of his own judgements, wherein so curiously[8] he had set this counterfeit.[9]

SECOND LORD.

We will not meddle with him[10] till he[11] come; for his[12] presence must be the whip of the other.

FIRST LORD.

In the mean time, what hear you of these wars?

SECOND LORD.

I hear there is an overture of peace.[13]

FIRST LORD.

Nay, I assure you, a peace concluded.

SECOND LORD.

What will Count Rousillon do then? will he travel higher,[14] or return again into France?

FIRST LORD.

I perceive, by this demand, you are not altogether of his council.

SECOND LORD.

Let it be forbid, sir! so should I be a great deal of his act.[15]

---

[1] **still:** always. [2] **ends:** destruction. [3] **o'erflows himself:** drowns himself. [4] **Is it . . . us:** do we not invite damnation. [5] **he is dieted to his hour:** that is, he is fully occupied until the hour of his appointment. [6] **company:** companion. [7] **anatomized:** shown up. [8] **curiously:** carefully. [9] **counterfeit:** fake gem. [10] **him:** Parolles. [11] **he:** Bertram. [12] **his:** Bertram's. [13] **an overture of peace:** a peace offer. [14] **higher:** farther. [15] **so . . . act:** if I were, I would have to share a lot of the responsibilty for his actions.

FIRST LORD.

Sir, his wife, some two months since, fled from his house; her pretence[1] is[2] a pilgrimage to Saint Jaques le Grand; which holy undertaking, with most austere sanctimony, she accomplisht; and, there residing, the tenderness of her nature became as a prey to her grief; in fine,[3] made a groan of her last breath; and now she sings in heaven.

SECOND LORD.

How is this justified? [4]

FIRST LORD.

The stronger part of it by her own letters, which make her story true, even to the point of her death: her death itself, which could not be her office to say is come, was faithfully confirm'd by the rector of the place.[5]

SECOND LORD.

Hath the count all this intelligence?

FIRST LORD.

Ay, and the particular confirmations, point from point, to the full arming of the verity.[6]

SECOND LORD.

I am heartily sorry that he'll be glad of this.

FIRST LORD.

How mightily sometimes we make us comforts of our losses!

SECOND LORD.

And how mightily some other times we drown our gain in tears! The great dignity that his valour hath here acquired for him shall at home be encounter'd with a shame as ample.

---

[1] **pretence:** purpose; intention.
[2] **is:** was.
[3] **in fine:** finally.
[4] **justified:** verified.
[5] **the rector of the place:** the priest at the inn.
[6] **to the . . . verity:** to the full corroboration of the truth.

FIRST LORD.

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipt them not: and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherisht by our virtues.

Enter a MESSENGER.

How now! where's your master?

MESSENGER.

He met the duke in the street, sir, of whom he hath taken a solemn leave: his lordship will next morning for France. The duke hath offer'd him letters of commendations to the king. [*Exit.*

SECOND LORD.

They shall be no more than needful there, if they were more than they can commend.[1]

FIRST LORD.

They cannot be too sweet for the king's tartness.[2]
Here's his lordship now.

Enter BERTRAM.

How now, my lord! is't not after midnight?

BERTRAM.

I have to-night dispatcht sixteen businesses, a month's length a-piece, by an abstract of success:[3] I have congied with the duke,[4] done my adieu with his nearest; buried a wife, mourn'd for her; writ to my lady mother I am returning; entertain'd my convoy;[5] and between these main parcels of dispatch,[6] effected many nicer[7] needs: the last was the greatest, but that I have not ended yet.

SECOND LORD.

If the business be of any difficulty, and this morning your departure hence, it requires haste of your lordship.

---

[1] **They shall . . . commend:** even if they recommended him more highly than he deserves, it would not be easy for him to regain the king's favor. [2] **tartness:** bitterness; disappointment in Bertram. [3] **by an abstract of success:** to sum up what I have done. [4] **congied with the duke:** taken my leave of the duke. [5] **entertain'd my convoy:** engaged my transportation. [6] **main parcels of dispatch:** urgent pieces of business. [7] **nicer:** more agreeable.

BERTRAM.

I mean, the business is not ended, as fearing to hear of it hereafter. But shall we have this dialogue between the fool and the soldier?—Come, bring forth this counterfeit module[1] has deceived me, like a double-meaning prophesier.

SECOND LORD.

Bring him forth [*Exeunt* SOLDIERS]:—has sat i'the stocks all night, poor gallant knave.

BERTRAM.

No matter; his heels have deserved it, in usurping[2] his spurs so long. How does he carry himself?

SECOND LORD.

I have told your lordship already,—the stocks carry him. But, to answer you as you would be understood; he weeps like a wench that had shed[3] her milk: he hath confest himself to Morgan, whom he supposes to be a friar, from the time of his remembrance to this very instant[4] disaster of his setting i'the stocks: and what think you he hath confest?

BERTRAM.

Nothing of me, has a'?

SECOND LORD.

His confession is taken, and it shall be read to his face: if your lordship be in't, as I believe you are, you must have the patience to hear it.

Enter SOLDIERS *with* PAROLLES *muffled.*

BERTRAM.

A plague upon him! muffled! he can say nothing of me.

FIRST LORD.

Hush, hush! Hoodman[5] comes.—*Porto tartarossa.*

---

[1] **module:** model; pattern.
[2] **usurping:** wearing unlawfully or unworthily.
[3] **shed:** spilled.
[4] **instant:** present.
[5] **Hoodman:** an allusion to the game of Blindman's Buff, in which the person who is "it" is blindfolded.

FIRST SOLDIER.

He calls for the tortures: what will you say without 'em?

PAROLLES.

I will confess what I know without constraint: if ye pinch me like a pasty,[1] I can say no more.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Bosko chimurcho.

FIRST LORD.

Boblibindo chicurmurco.

FIRST SOLDIER.

You are a merciful general.—Our general bids you answer to what I shall ask you out of a note.[2]

PAROLLES.

And truly, as I hope to live.

FIRST SOLDIER [*reads*].

'First demand of him how many horse[3] the duke is strong.' What say you to that?

PAROLLES.

Five or six thousand; but very weak and unserviceable: the troops are all scatter'd, and the commanders very poor rogues, upon my reputation and credit, and as I hope to live.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Shall I set down your answer so?

PAROLLES.

Do: I'll take the sacrament on't, how and which way you will.

BERTRAM.

All's one to him.[4] What a past-saving slave is this!

FIRST LORD.

Y'are deceived, my lord: this is Monsieur Parolles, the gallant militarist,—that was his own phrase,—that had the

---

[1] **pasty:** meat pie.
[2] **note:** list of questions.
[3] **horse:** cavalry.
[4] **All's one to him:** nothing matters to him.

whole theoric[1] of war in the knot of his scarf, and the practice in the chape[2] of his dagger.

SECOND LORD.

I will never trust a man again for keeping his sword clean; nor believe he can have every thing in him by wearing his apparel neatly.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Well, that's set down.

PAROLLES.

Five or six thousand horse, I said,—I will say true,—or thereabouts, set down,—for I'll speak truth.

FIRST LORD.

He's very near the truth in this.

BERTRAM.

But I con him no thanks for't,[3] in the nature he delivers it.

PAROLLES.

Poor rogues, I pray you, say.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Well, that's set down.

PAROLLES.

I humbly thank you, sir. A truth's a truth,—the rogues are marvellous poor.

FIRST SOLDIER [*reads*].

'Demand of him, of what strength they are a-foot.' What say you to that?

PAROLLES.

By my troth, sir, if I were to live but this present hour,[4] I will tell true. Let me see: Spurio, a hundred and fifty; Sebastian, so many; Corambus, so many; Jaques, so many; Guiltian, Cosmo, Lodowick, and Gratii, two hundred fifty

---

[1] **theoric:** theory.
[2] **chape:** the metallic point of a scabbard.
[3] **I con . . . for't:** I am not beholden to him for it.
[4] **if I were . . . hour:** if I had only an hour to live.

each; mine own company, Chitopher, Vaumond, Bentii, two hundred fifty each: so that the muster-file, rotten and sound,[1] upon my life, amounts not to fifteen thousand poll;[2] half of the which dare not shake the snow from off their cassocks,[3] lest they shake themselves to pieces.

BERTRAM.

What shall be done to him?

FIRST LORD.

Nothing, but let him have thanks.—Demand of him my condition, and what credit I have with the duke.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Well, that's set down. [*Reads*] 'You shall demand of him, whether one Captain Dumain be i'the camp, a Frenchman; what his reputation is with the duke; what his valour, honesty, and expertness in wars; or whether he thinks it were not possible, with well-weighing sums of gold, to corrupt him to a revolt.' What say you to this? what do you know of it?

PAROLLES.

I beseech you, let me answer to the particular of the inter'gatories: demand them singly.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Do you know this Captain Dumain?

PAROLLES.

I know him: a' was a botcher's 'prentice[4] in Paris, from whence he was whipt for getting the shrieve's fool[5] with child,—a dumb innocent, that could not say him nay.

FIRST LORD *lifts up his hand in anger.*

---

[1] **rotten and sound:** sick and healthy.
[2] **poll:** head.
[3] **cassocks:** military cloaks.
[4] **botcher's 'prentice:** tailor's (one who repairs or patches) apprentice.
[5] **the shrieve's fool:** an idiot girl placed in the sheriff's care.

BERTRAM.

Nay, by your leave, hold your hands; though I know his brains are forfeit to the next tile that falls.[1]

FIRST SOLDIER.

Well, is this captain in the Duke of Florence's camp?

PAROLLES.

Upon my knowledge, he is, and lousy.

FIRST LORD.

Nay, look not so upon me; we shall hear of your lordship anon.

FIRST SOLDIER.

What is his reputation with the duke?

PAROLLES.

The duke knows him for no other but a poor officer of mine; and writ to me this other day to turn him out o'the band: I think I have his letter in my pocket.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Marry, we'll search.

PAROLLES.

In good sadness,[2] I do not know; either it is there, or it is upon a file, with the duke's other letters, in my tent.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Here 'tis; here's a paper: shall I read it to you?

PAROLLES.

I do not know if it be it or no.

BERTRAM.

Our interpreter does it well.

---

[1] **forfeit . . . falls:** a probable allusion to a story in Whitsey's *Emblems*, in which three women throw dice to see which one will die first; the woman who throws the lowest dice is laughing at fate when a tile falls and ends her life.

[2] **In good sadness:** seriously.

FIRST LORD.

Excellently.

FIRST SOLDIER [*reads*].

Dian, the count's a fool, and full of gold,—

PAROLLES.

That is not the duke's letter, sir; that is an advertisement[1] to a proper[2] maid in Florence, one Diana, to take heed of the allurement of one Count Rousillon, a foolish idle boy, but, for all that, very ruttish:[3] I pray you, sir, put it up again.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Nay, I'll read it first, by your favour.

PAROLLES.

My meaning in't, I protest, was very honest[4] in the behalf of the maid; for I knew the young count to be a dangerous and lascivious boy, who is a whale to virginity, and devours up all the fry[5] it finds.

BERTRAM.

Damnable both-sides rogue!

FIRST SOLDIER [*reads*].

When he swears oaths, bid him drop gold, and take it;
After he scores,[6] he never pays the score:
Half won is match well made; match, and well make it;
He ne'er pays after-debts, take it before;
And say a soldier, Dian, told thee this,
Men are to mell[7] with, boys are but to kiss:
For count of this, the count's a fool, I know it,
Who pays before, but not when he does owe[8] it.

Thine, as he vow'd to thee in thine ear,

PAROLLES.

---

[1] **an advertisement:** an admonition. [2] **proper:** pretty. [3] **ruttish:** lustful. [4] **honest:** honorable. [5] **fry:** young fish. [6] **scores:** *incurs a debt.* [7] **mell:** mix; meddle. [8] **owe:** own.

BERTRAM.

He shall be whipt through the army, with this rime in's[1] forehead.

SECOND LORD.

This is your devoted friend, sir, the manifold linguist and the armipotent[2] soldier.

BERTRAM.

I could endure any thing before but a cat, and now he's a cat to me.

FIRST SOLDIER.

I perceive, sir, by our general's looks, we shall be fain[3] to hang you.

PAROLLES.

My life, sir, in any case: not that I am afraid to die; but that, my offences being many, I would repent out the remainder of nature:[4] let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i'the stocks, or any where, so I may live.

FIRST SOLDIER.

We'll see what may be done, so you confess freely; therefore, once more to this Captain Dumain: you have answer'd to his reputation with the duke, and to his valour: what is his honesty?

PAROLLES.

He will steal, sir, an egg out of a cloister:[5] for rapes and ravishments he parallels Nessus:[6] he professes[7] not keeping of oaths; in breaking 'em he is stronger than Hercules: he will lie, sir, with such volubility, that you would think truth were a fool: drunkenness is his best virtue, for he will be swine-drunk; and in his sleep he does little harm, save to his bed-clothes about him; but they know his conditions, and lay

---

[1] **in's:** on his. [2] **armipotent:** powerful in battle. [3] **fain:** obliged. [4] **repent . . . nature:** *spend the rest of my natural life in repentance.* [5] **He will steal . . . cloister:** that is, he will steal anything. [6] **Nessus:** the Centaur killed by Hercules for attempting to carry off Dejanira. [7] **professes:** boasts.

him in straw. I have but little more to say, sir, of his honesty: he has every thing that an honest man should not have; what an honest man should have, he has nothing.

FIRST LORD.

I begin to love him for this.

BERTRAM.

For this description of thine honesty? A pox upon him for me, he's more and more a cat.

FIRST SOLDIER.

What say you to his expertness in war?

PAROLLES.

Faith, sir, has led [1] the drum before the English tragedians, —to belie him, I will not,—and more of his soldiership I know not; except, in that country he had the honour to be the officer at a place there called Mile-end,[2] to instruct for the doubling of files: I would do the man what honour I can, but of this I am not certain.

FIRST LORD.

He hath out-villain'd villainy so far, that the rarity redeems him.

BERTRAM.

A pox on him, he's a cat still.

FIRST SOLDIER.

His qualities being at this poor price, I need not to ask you if gold will corrupt him to revolt.

PAROLLES.

Sir, for a cardecu[3] he will sell the fee-simple of his salvation, the inheritance of it; and cut th'entail from all remainders,[4] and a perpetual succession for it perpetually.[5]

FIRST SOLDIER.

What's his brother, the other Captain Dumain?

---

[1] **led:** carried. [2] **Mile-end:** a field where the citizens of London used to be mustered and drilled. [3] **cardecu:** *quart d'écu*; a quarter of a French crown—fifteen pence. [4] **cut th'entail from all remainders:** disinherit all his heirs. [5] **and a perpetual . . . perpetually:** forever and ever.

SECOND LORD.

Why does he ask him of me?

FIRST SOLDIER.

What's he?

PAROLLES.

E'en a crow o'the same nest; not altogether so great as the first in goodness, but greater a great deal in evil: he excels his brother for[1] a coward, yet his brother is reputed one of the best that is: in a retreat he outruns any lackey;[2] marry, in coming on[3] he has the cramp.

FIRST SOLDIER.

If your life be saved, will you undertake to betray the Florentine?

PAROLLES.

Ay, and the captain of his horse, Count Rousillon.

FIRST SOLDIER.

I'll whisper with the general, and know his pleasure.

PAROLLES [*aside*].

I'll no more drumming; a plague of all drums! Only to seem to deserve well, and to beguile the supposition[4] of that lascivious young boy the count, have I run into this danger: yet who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?

FIRST SOLDIER.

There is no remedy, sir, but you must die: the general says, you that have so traitorously discover'd the secrets of your army, and made such pestiferous reports of men very nobly held, can serve the world for no honest use; therefore you must die.—Come, headsman, off with his head.

---

[1] **for:** in being.
[2] **lackey:** servant who runs errands.
[3] **coming on:** advancing (in battle).
[4] **beguile the supposition:** set at rest the doubt.

PAROLLES.

O Lord, sir, let me live, or let me see my death!

FIRST SOLDIER.

That shall you, and take your leave of all your friends.

[*Unmuffling him.*

So, look about you: know you any here?

BERTRAM.

Good morrow, noble captain.

SECOND LORD.

God bless you, Captain Parolles.

FIRST LORD.

God saye you, noble captain.

SECOND LORD.

Captain, what greeting will you to my Lord Lafeu? I am for France.[1]

FIRST LORD.

Good captain, will you give me a copy of the sonnet you writ to Diana in behalf of the Count Rousillon? an[2] I were not a very[3] coward, I'ld compel it of you; but fare you well.

[*Exeunt* BERTRAM *and* LORDS.

FIRST SOLDIER.

You are undone, captain; all but your scarf, that has a knot on't yet.

PAROLLES.

Who cannot be crusht with a plot? [4]

FIRST SOLDIER.

If you could find out a country where but women were that had received so much shame, you might begin an impudent nation. Fare ye well, sir; I am for France too: we shall speak of you there. [*Exit with* SOLDIERS.

PAROLLES.

Yet am I thankful: if my heart were great,

---

[1] **I am for France:** I am about to set out for France.
[2] **an:** if.
[3] **very:** complete.
[4] **plot:** stratagem.

'Twould burst at this. Captain I'll be no more;
But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft
As captain shall: simply the thing I am
Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart,
Let him fear this; for it will come to pass,
That every braggart shall be found an ass.
Rust, sword! cool, blushes! and, Parolles, live
Safest in shame! being fool'd,[1] by foolery thrive!
There's place and means for every man alive.
I'll after them. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

Florence. A room in the WIDOW'S *house.*

Enter HELENA, WIDOW, *and* DIANA.

HELENA.

That you may well perceive I have not wrong'd you,
One of the greatest in the Christian world
Shall be my surety; 'fore whose throne 'tis needful,
Ere I can perfect mine intents,[2] to kneel:
Time was, I did him a desired office,
Dear almost as his life; which gratitude
Through flinty Tartar's bosom would peep forth,
And answer, thanks: I duly am inform'd
His Grace is at Marseilles; to which place
We have convenient convoy. You must know,
I am supposed dead: the army breaking,[3]
My husband hies him[4] home; where, heaven aiding,

---

[1] **fool'd:** made a fool of.
[2] **perfect mine intents:** carry out my intentions.
[3] **breaking:** disbanding.
[4] **hies him:** hurries.

And by the leave of my good lord the king,
We'll be before our welcome.[1]

WIDOW.

Gentle madam,
You never had a servant to whose trust
Your business was more welcome.

HELENA.

Nor you, mistress,
Ever a friend whose thoughts more truly labour
To recompense your love: doubt not but heaven
Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower,
As it hath fated her to be my motive[2]
And helper to a husband. But, O strange men!
That can such sweet use make of what they hate,
When saucy[3] trusting of the cozen'd[4] thoughts
Defiles the pitchy night! so lust doth play
With what it loathes, for that[5] which is away:
But more of this hereafter.—You, Diana,
Under my poor instructions yet must suffer
Something in my behalf.

DIANA.

Let death and honesty[6]
Go with your impositions, I am yours
Upon your will[7] to suffer.

HELENA.

Yet,[8] I pray you:
But, with the word,[9] the time will bring on summer,[10]
When briers shall have leaves as well as thorns,
And be as sweet as sharp. We must away;
Our wagon is prepared, and time revives us:
All's Well that Ends Well: still the fine's the crown;[11]
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown.

[*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **be . . . welcome:** arrive there before we are expected. [2] **motive:** instrument. [3] **saucy:** wanton. [4] **cozen'd:** deceived. [5] **for that:** in place of that. [6] **death and honesty:** honorable death. [7] **Upon your will:** in accordance with your will. [8] **Yet:** yet awhile. [9] **with the word:** in a very short time. [10] **summer:** end of your ordeal. [11] **the fine's the crown:** the end is the crowning achievement; possibly from the Latin proverb, *"Finis coronat opus."*

Scene V.

Rousillon. A room in the house of the COUNTESS.

Enter COUNTESS, LAFEU, *and* CLOWN.

LAFEU.

No, no, no, your son was misled with a snipt-taffeta fellow[1] there, whose villainous saffron[2] would have made all the unbaked and doughy youth of a nation in his colour: your daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanced by the king than by that red-tail'd humble-bee I speak of.

COUNTESS.

I would he had not known him! it was the death of the most virtuous gentlewoman that ever nature had praise for creating: if she had partaken of my flesh, and cost me the dearest[3] groans of a mother, I could not have owed her a more rooted love.

LAFEU.

'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady: we may pick a thousand sallets[4] ere we light on such another herb.

CLOWN.

Indeed, sir, she was the sweet marjoram of the sallet, or rather, the herb of grace.[5]

LAFEU.

They are not sallet-herbs, you knave; they are nose-herbs.[6]

CLOWN.

I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir; I have not much skill in grass.

---

[1] **snipt-taffeta fellow:** a man dressed in slashed taffeta; usually the sleeves and doublet were slashed, with fabric of another color showing through. [2] **saffron:** cowardice; a yellow herb used to color and flavor foods. [3] **dearest:** most heart-rending. [4] **sallets:** salad greens. [5] **herb of grace:** rue. [6] **nose-herbs:** herbs valued for their sweet scent, and not to be eaten.

LAFEU.

Whether[1] dost thou profess thyself,—a knave or a fool?

CLOWN.

A fool, sir, at a woman's service, and a knave at a man's.

LAFEU.

Your distinction?

CLOWN.

I would cozen the man of his wife, and do his service.

LAFEU.

So you were a knave at his service, indeed.

CLOWN.

And I would give his wife my bauble,[2] sir, to do her service.

LAFEU.

I will subscribe[3] for thee, thou art both knave and fool.

CLOWN.

At your service.

LAFEU.

No, no, no.

CLOWN.

Why, sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a prince as you are.

LAFEU.

Who's that? a Frenchman?

CLOWN.

Faith, sir, a' has an English name; but his phisnomy[4] is more hotter in France than there.

LAFEU.

What prince is that?

---

[1] **Whether:** which.

[2] **bauble:** a fool's baton or scepter, usually ornamented with a fool's head or that of a doll or puppet.

[3] **subscribe:** testify.

[4] **phisnomy:** physiognomy; face.

CLOWN.

The black prince,[1] sir; *alias*, the prince of darkness; *alias*, the devil.

LAFEU.

Hold thee, there's my purse: I give thee not this to suggest[2] thee from thy master thou talk'st of; serve him still.

CLOWN.

I am a woodland fellow, sir, that always loved a great fire; and the master I speak of ever keeps a good fire. But, sure, he is the prince of the world; let his nobility remain in's court. I am for the house with the narrow gate,[3] which I take to be too little for pomp to enter: some that humble themselves may; but the many will be too chill and tender, and they'll be for the flowery way[4] that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.

LAFEU.

Go thy ways, I begin to be a-weary of thee; and I tell thee so before, because I would not fall out with thee. Go thy ways: let my horses be well lookt to, without any tricks.

CLOWN.

If I put any tricks upon 'em, sir, they shall be jades' tricks; which are their own right by the law of nature.

[*Exit.*

LAFEU.

A shrewd[5] knave and an unhappy.[6]

COUNTESS.

So he is. My lord that's gone made himself much sport out of him: by his authority he remains here, which he thinks is a patent[7] for his sauciness; and, indeed, he has no pace,[8] but runs where he will.

---

[1] **black prince:** Edward, the Black Prince, Edward III's son. [2] **suggest:** entice; tempt. [3] **narrow gate:** *see* Matthew 5:13. [4] **flowery way:** "primrose path." [5] **shrewd:** sharp-tongued. [6] **unhappy:** mischievous. [7] **patent:** license. [8] **pace:** a prescribed walk (as a trained horse).

LAFEU.

I like him well; 'tis not amiss. And I was about to tell you, since I heard of the good lady's death, and that my lord your son was upon his return home, I moved the king my master to speak in the behalf of my daughter; which, in the minority of them both, his majesty, out of a self-gracious remembrance,[1] did first propose; his highness hath promised me to do it: and, to stop up the displeasure he hath conceived against your son, there is no fitter matter. How does your ladyship like it?

COUNTESS.

With very much content, my lord; and I wish it happily effected.

LAFEU.

His highness comes post[2] from Marseilles, of as able body as when he number'd thirty:[3] he will be here to-morrow, or I am deceived by him that in such intelligence[4] hath seldom fail'd.

COUNTESS.

It rejoices me, that I hope I shall see him ere I die. I have letters that my son will be here to-night: I shall beseech your lordship to remain with me till they meet together.

LAFEU.

Madam, I was thinking with what manners I might safely be admitted.

COUNTESS.

You need but plead your honourable privilege.

LAFEU.

Lady, of that I have made a bold charter;[5] but, I thank my God, it holds yet.[6]

---

[1] **out of a self-gracious remembrance:** graciously, and of his own accord. [2] **by post:** by horseback; speedily. [3] **number'd thirty:** was thirty years old. [4] **intelligence:** news reports. [5] **made a bold charter:** made bold use. [6] **holds yet:** is still good.

Enter CLOWN.

CLOWN.

O madam, yonder's my lord your son with a patch of velvet on's face: whether there be a scar under't or no, the velvet knows: but 'tis a goodly patch of velvet: his left cheek is a cheek of two pile[1] and a half, but his right cheek is worn bare.

LAFEU.

A scar nobly got, or a noble scar, is a good livery[2] of honour; so belike[3] is that.

CLOWN.

But it is your carbonadoed face.[4]

LAFEU.

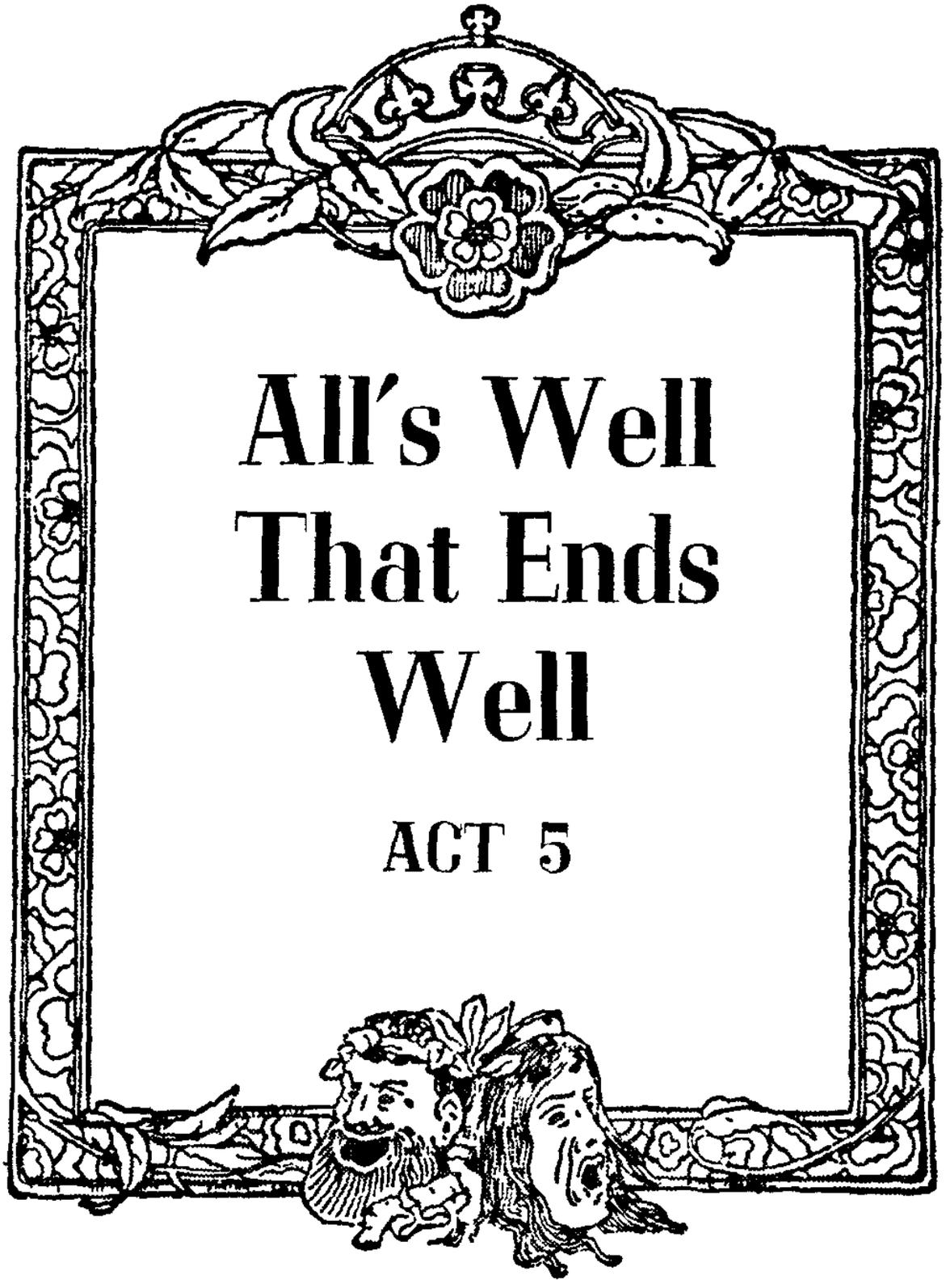
Let us go see your son, I pray you: I long to talk with the young noble soldier.

CLOWN.

Faith, there's a dozen of 'em, with delicate fine hats, and most courteous feathers, which bow the head and nod at every man. [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **pile:** the thickness of the velvet patch that Bertram wears.
[2] **livery:** badge or token.
[3] **belike:** most likely.
[4] **your carbonadoed face:** the typical slashed face resulting from the lancing of a boil.



All's Well That Ends Well

ACT 5

ACT V

THE WOMEN find that the King has left Marseilles. They plan to continue on to Rousillon, and Diana sends a letter to precede them. Meanwhile Parolles, thoroughly despised by all, is grateful when Lafeu relents and accepts him. Arrangements for the new betrothal proceed smoothly, with the King graciously agreeing, until Bertram produces a ring for Lafeu's daughter. All are shocked to see that it is Helena's ring, given her by the King himself, and when Bertram denies it and says the ring was thrown to him from a window by a noble Florentine lady, he is arrested. Diana's letter is now read in the court. Bertram promised to marry her, she says, when his wife died, but he has deserted her. Confronted with Diana and her mother, Bertram is forced to confess his association. He agrees that he and Diana exchanged rings but he accuses her of being a camp prostitute. Parolles supports the story of the exchange of rings and the King threatens Diana with death if she refuses to disclose how she came to possess Helena's ring. Diana answers that her mother will give her bail and the Widow Capilet then enters with Helena. Helena has Bertram's ring, and she is pregnant. Bertram, thoroughly contrite, agrees to love his wife dearly and the King expresses satisfaction at the turn of events.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Marseilles. A street.

Enter HELENA, WIDOW, *and* DIANA, *with two* ATTENDANTS.

HELENA.

But this exceeding posting[1] day and night
Must wear your spirits low; we cannot help it:
But, since you have made the days and nights as one,
To wear your gentle limbs in my affairs,
Be bold[2] you do so grow in my requital[3]
As nothing can unroot you.—In happy time;[4]—

---

[1] **posting:** haste.
[2] **bold:** assured.
[3] **grow . . . requital:** strengthen my resolve to reward you.
[4] **In happy time:** at a most favorable time.

Enter a GENTLE ASTRINGER.[1]

This man may help me to his majesty's ear,
If he would spend his power.—God save you, sir.

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

And you.

HELENA.

Sir, I have seen you in the court of France.

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

I have been sometimes there.

HELENA.

I do presume, sir, that you are not fall'n
From the report that goes upon your goodness;
And therefore, goaded with most sharp occasions,[2]
Which lay nice manners by,[3] I put you to[4]
The use of your own virtues; for the which
I shall continue thankful.

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

What's your will?

HELENA.

That it will please you
To give this poor[5] petition to the king;
And aid me with that store of power you have
To come into his presence.

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

The king's not here.

HELENA.

Not here, sir!

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

Not, indeed:
He hence removed last night, and with more haste
Than is his use.[6]

---

[1] **GENTLE ASTRINGER:** gentleman keeper of goshawks (falcons).
[2] **sharp occasions:** urgent necessities.
[3] **lay . . . by:** put aside the niceties of politeness.
[4] **put you to:** urge you to.
[5] **poor:** humble.
[6] **use:** custom.

WIDOW.

Lord, how we lose our pains!

HELENA.

All's Well that Ends Well yet,
Though time seem so adverse and means unfit.—
I do beseech you, whither is he gone?

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

Marry, as I take it, to Rousillon;
Whither I am going.

HELENA.

I do beseech you, sir,
Since you are like[1] to see the king before me,
Commend the paper to his gracious hand;
Which, I presume, shall render you no blame,
But rather make you thank your pains for it.
I will come after you with what good speed
Our means will make us means.

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

This I'll do for you.

HELENA.

And you shall find yourself to be well thankt,
Whate'er falls[2] more.—We must to horse again:—
Go, go, provide. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

Rousillon. Before the house of the COUNTESS.

Enter CLOWN *and* PAROLLES.

PAROLLES.

Good Monsieur Lavache, give my Lord Lafeu this letter: I have ere now, sir, been better known to you, when I have held familiarity with fresher clothes;[1] but I am now, sir,

---

[1] **like:** likely.
[2] **Whate'er falls:** whatever happens.
[1] **held . . . clothes:** been more neatly dressed.

muddied in Fortune's mood,[2] and smell somewhat strong of her strong displeasure.

CLOWN.

Truly, Fortune's displeasure is but sluttish, if it smell so strongly as thou speak'st of: I will henceforth eat no fish of Fortune's buttering. Prithee, allow the wind.[3]

PAROLLES.

Nay, you need not to stop your nose, sir; I spake but by a metaphor.

CLOWN.

Indeed, sir, if your metaphor stink, I will stop my nose; or against any man's metaphor. Prithee, get thee further.

PAROLLES.

Pray you, sir, deliver me this paper.[4]

CLOWN.

Foh, prithee, stand away: a paper from Fortune's close-stool[5] to give a nobleman! Look, here he comes himself.

Enter LAFEU.

Here is a pur of Fortune's, sir, or of Fortune's cat,—but not a musk-cat,—[6] that has fall'n into the unclean fishpond of her displeasure, and, as he says, is muddied withal: pray you, sir, use the carp as you may: for he looks like a poor, decay'd, ingenious, foolish, rascally knave. I do pity his distress in my similes of comfort, and leave him to your lordship. [*Exit.*

PAROLLES.

My lord, I am a man whom Fortune hath cruelly scratcht.

---

[2] **in Fortune's mood:** in the whimsical caprices of Fortune.
[3] **allow the wind:** stand to the leeward of me.
[4] **deliver me this paper:** deliver this paper for me.
[5] **close-stool:** privy.
[6] **musk-cat:** civet cat, source of musk used in perfumes.

LAFEU.

And what would you have me to do? 'tis too late to pare her nails now. Wherein have you play'd the knave with Fortune, that she should scratch you, who of herself is a good lady, and would not have knaves thrive long under her? There's a cardecu for you: let the justices make you and Fortune friends;[1] I am for other business.

PAROLLES.

I beseech your honour to hear me one single word.

LAFEU.

You beg a single penny more: come, you shall ha't; save your word.

PAROLLES.

My name, my good lord, is Parolles.

LAFEU.

You beg more than 'word,' then.—Cox my passion![2] give me your hand:—how does your drum?

PAROLLES.

O my good lord, you were the first that found me!

LAFEU.

Was I, in sooth? and I was the first that lost thee.

PAROLLES.

It lies in you, my lord, to bring me in some grace,[3] for you did bring me out.

LAFEU.

Out upon thee, knave! dost thou put upon me at once both the office of God and the devil? one brings thee in grace, and the other brings thee out. [*Trumpets sound.*] The king's coming; I know by his trumpets.—Sirrah, inquire further after me; I had talk of you last night: though you are a fool and a knave, you shall eat; go to, follow.

---

[1] **let the justices . . . friends:** that is, let the justices issue him a license to beg.

[2] **Cox my passion:** a corruption of "God's my passion."

[3] **grace:** favor.

PAROLLES.
praise God for you. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.

The same. A room in the house of the COUNTESS.

Flourish. Enter KING, COUNTESS, LAFEU, *the two French* LORDS, GENTLEMEN, GUARDS, *&c.*

KING.
We lost a jewel of her;[1] and our esteem
Was made much poorer by it: but your son,
As mad in folly, lackt the sense to know
Her estimation home.[2]

COUNTESS.
'Tis past, my liege;
And I beseech your majesty to make[3] it
Natural rebellion, done i'the blaze of youth;
When oil and fire, too strong for reason's force,
O'erbears it, and burns on.

KING.
My honour'd lady,
I have forgiven and forgotten all;
Though my revenges were high-bent[4] upon him,
And watcht the time to shoot.

LAFEU.
This I must say,—
But first I beg my pardon,—the young lord
Did to his majesty, his mother, and his lady,
Offence of mighty note: but to himself
The greatest wrong of all: he lost a wife,
Whose beauty did astonish[5] the survey[6]

---

[1] **of her:** in losing her.
[2] **home:** thoroughly.
[3] **make:** consider.
[4] **high-bent:** a metaphor taken from the bending of a bow.
[5] **astonish:** amaze.
[6] **survey:** sight.

Of richest eyes;[1] whose words all ears took captive;
Whose dear perfection hearts that scorn'd to serve
Humbly call'd mistress.

KING.

Praising what is lost
Makes the remembrance dear. Well, call him hither;
We are reconciled, and the first view shall kill
All repetition:[2]—let him not ask our pardon;
The nature of his great offence is dead,
And deeper than oblivion we do bury
Th'incensing reliques of it:[3] let him approach,
A stranger, no offender; and inform him
So 'tis our will he should.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

I shall, my liege. [*Exit.*

KING.

What says he to your daughter? have you spoke?

LAFEU.

All that he is hath reference to[4] your highness.

KING.

Then shall we have a match. I have letters sent me
That sets him high in fame.

Enter BERTRAM, *with* FIRST GENTLEMAN.

LAFEU.

He looks well on't.

KING.

I am not a day of season,[5]
For thou mayst see a sunshine and a hail
In me at once: but to the brightest beams
Distracted clouds give way; so stand thou forth,
The time is fair again.

BERTRAM.

My high-repented blames,[6]

---

[1] **richest eyes:** most experienced eyes (eyes having seen the most). [2] **repetition:** remembrance (of the past). [3] **Th'incensing reliques of it:** the memories of the offense that might cause us to hate anew. [4] **hath reference to:** is dependent upon. [5] **a day of season:** a seasonable day. [6] **high-repented blames:** deeply repented sins.

Dear sovereign, pardon to me.

KING.

All is whole;
Not one word more of the consumed time.[1]
Let's take the instant by the forward top;[2]
For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees
Th'inaudible and noiseless foot of Time
Steals ere we can effect them. You remember
The daughter of this lord?

BERTRAM.

Admiringly, my liege: at first
I stuck my choice upon her, ere my heart
Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue:
Where the impression of mine eye infixing,
Contempt his scornful perspective[3] did lend me,
Which warpt the line of every other favour;[4]
Scorn'd a fair colour, or exprest it stol'n;[5]
Extended or contracted all proportions
To a most hideous object: thence it came
That she[6] whom all men praised, and whom myself,
Since I have lost, have loved, was in mine eye
The dust that did offend it.

KING.

Well excused:
That thou didst love her, strikes some scores away
From the great compt:[7] but love that comes too late,
Like a remorseful pardon slowly carried,
To the great sender turns a sour offence,
Crying, 'That's good that's gone.' Our rasher faults
Make trivial price of serious things we have,

---

[1] **consumed time:** time that is past. [2] **Let's . . . top:** "Take Time by the forelock"—Thales of Miletus (636–546 B.C.). [3] **perspective:** a glass producing an optical illusion. [4] **favour:** facial appearance. [5] **exprest it stol'n:** declared it artificial. [6] **she:** Helen. [7] **compt:** account.

Not knowing them until we know their grave:
Oft our displeasures, to ourselves unjust,
Destroy our friends, and after weep their dust:
Our old love waking cries to see what's done,
While shameful hate sleeps out the afternoon.[1]
Be this sweet Helen's knell, and now forget her.
Send forth your amorous token for fair Maudlin:[2]
The main consents are had; and here we'll stay
To see our widower's second marriage-day.

COUNTESS.

Which better than the first, O dear heaven, bless!
Or, ere they meet, in me, O nature, cesse![3]

LAFEU.

Come on, my son, in whom my house's name
Must be digested,[4] give a favour[5] from you,
To sparkle in the spirits of my daughter,
That she may quickly come.—

[BERTRAM *gives a ring to* LAFEU.

By my old beard,
And every hair that's on't, Helen, that's dead,
Was a sweet creature: such a ring as this,
The last[6] that e'er I took her leave at court,
I saw upon her finger.

BERTRAM.

Hers it was not.

KING.

Now, pray you, let me see it; for mine eye,
While I was speaking, oft was fasten'd to't.—
This ring was mine, and when I gave it Helen,
I bade her,[7] if her fortunes ever stood
Necessitied to help,[8] that by this token
I would relieve her. Had you that craft, to reave[9] her
Of what should stead[10] her most?

---

[1] **sleeps out the afternoon:** is indifferent to the distress it has caused. [2] **Maudlin:** colloquial form of Magdalen. [3] **cesse:** cease; decease. [4] **digested:** absorbed. [5] **favour:** gift; keepsake. [6] **the last:** the last time. [7] **bade her:** told her. [8] **Necessitied to help:** in need of help. [9] **reave:** bereave; deprive. [10] **stead:** help.

BERTRAM.

My gracious sovereign,
Howe'er it pleases you to take it so,[1]
The ring was never hers.

COUNTESS.

Son, on my life,
I have seen her wear it; and she reckon'd it[2]
At her life's rate.

LAFEU.

I am sure I saw her wear it.

BERTRAM.

You are deceived, my lord; she never saw it:
In Florence was it from a casement thrown me,
Wrapt in a paper, which contain'd the name
Of her that threw it: noble she was, and thought
I stood engaged:[3] but when I had subscribed
To mine own fortune,[4] and inform'd her fully
I could not answer in that course of honour
As she had made the overture, she ceased
In heavy satisfaction,[5] and would never
Receive the ring again.

KING.

Plutus[6] himself,
That knows the tinct and multiplying medicine,[7]
Hath not in nature's mystery more science[8]
Than I have in this ring: 'twas mine, 'twas Helen's,
Whoever gave it you. Then, if you know
That you are well acquainted with yourself,
Confess 'twas hers, and by what rough enforcement
You got it from her: she call'd the saints to surety
That she would never put it from her finger,
Unless she gave it to yourself in bed,—

---

[1] **to take it so:** to think it is so. [2] **reckon'd it:** valued it. [3] **engaged:** unengaged. [4] **subscribed . . . fortune:** admitted my married condition. [5] **heavy satisfaction:** sorrowful acquiescence. [6] **Plutus:** god of wealth. [7] **tinct and multiplying medicine:** the alchemist's formula for changing base metals into gold by the use of the mythical philosopher's stone. [8] **science:** knowledge.

Where you have never come,—or sent it us
Upon[1] her great disaster.

BERTRAM.

She never saw it.

KING.

Thou speak'st it falsely, as I love mine honour;
And makest conjectural fears to come into me,
Which I would fain shut out. If it should prove
That thou art so inhuman,—'twill not prove so;—
And yet I know not:—thou didst hate her deadly,
And she is dead, which nothing, but to close
Her eyes myself, could win me to believe,
More than to see this ring.—Take him away.—
[*Guards seize* BERTRAM.
My fore-past proofs, howe'er the matter fall,
Shall tax my fears of little vanity,
Having vainly fear'd too little.[2]—Away with him!—
We'll sift this matter further.

BERTRAM.

If you shall prove
This ring was ever hers, you shall as easy
Prove that I husbanded her bed in Florence,
Where yet she never was. [*Exit, guarded.*

KING.

I am wrapt in dismal thinkings.

Enter a GENTLE ASTRINGER.

GENTLE ASTRINGER.

Gracious sovereign,
Whether I have been to blame or no, I know not:
Here's a petition from a Florentine,
Who hath for four or five removes come short[3]
To tender[4] it herself. I undertook it,
Vanquisht thereto by the fair grace and speech

---

[1] **Upon:** at the time of. [2] **My fore-past proofs . . . little:** no matter what is revealed, I shall not be ashamed of having feared too much, since it is clear that up to now I have been too unsuspecting. [3] **Who hath . . . short:** who has just barely missed you at four or five of your post stops. [4] **tender:** offer.

Of the poor suppliant, who by this, I know,
Is here attending: her business looks in her
With an importing visage;[1] and she told me,
In a sweet verbal brief,[2] it did concern
Your highness with[3] herself.

KING [*reads*].

Upon his many protestations to marry me when his wife was dead, I blush to say it, he won me. Now is the Count Rousillon a widower: his vows are forfeited to me, and my honour's paid to him. He stole from Florence, taking no leave, and I follow him to his country for justice: grant it me, O king! in you it best lies; otherwise a seducer flourishes, and a poor maid is undone.[4]

DIANA CAPULET.

LAFEU.

I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair, and toll[5] for this, I'll none of him.

KING.

The heavens have thought well on[6] thee, Lafeu,
To bring forth this discov'ry.—Seek these suitors.—
Go speedily and bring again the count.

[*Exeunt* GENTLEMAN *and some* ATTENDANTS.

I am afeared the life of Helen, lady,
Was foully snatcht.

COUNTESS.

Now, justice on the doers!

Enter BERTRAM, *guarded.*

KING.

I wonder, sir, sith[7] wives are monsters to you,
And that you fly them as you swear them lordship,[8]
Yet you desire to marry.

---

[1] **looks in her . . . visage:** seems, from the way she looked, to be important. [2] **brief:** report. [3] **with:** as well as. [4] **undone:** ruined. [5] **toll:** pay a tax (for the liberty of getting rid of him). [6] **on:** of. [7] **sith:** since. [8] **as you . . . lordship:** as soon as you promise them marriage.

Enter GENTLEMAN, *with* WIDOW *and* DIANA.

What woman's that?

DIANA.

I am, my lord, a wretched Florentine,
Derived [1] from the ancient Capulet:
My suit, as I do understand, you know,
And therefore know how far I may be pitied.

WIDOW.

I am her mother, sir, whose age and honour
Both suffer under this complaint we bring;
And both shall cease,[2] without your remedy.

KING.

Come hither, count: do you know these women?

BERTRAM.

My lord, I neither can nor will deny
But that I know them: do they charge me further?

DIANA.

Why do you look so strange upon your wife?

BERTRAM.

She's none of mine, my lord.

DIANA.

If you shall marry,
You give away this hand, and that is mine;
You give away heaven's vows, and those are mine;
You give away myself, which is known mine;
For I by vow am so embodied yours,[3]
That she which marries you must marry me,—
Either both or none.

LAFEU [*to* BERTRAM].

Your reputation comes too short for my daughter;[4] you are no husband for her.

---

[1] **Derived:** descended.
[2] **cease:** die.
[3] **embodied yours:** made one with you.
[4] **comes too short . . . daughter:** does not measure up to my requirements for my daughter's husband.

BERTRAM.

My lord this is a fond [1] and desperate creature,
Whom sometime I have laught with: let your highness
Lay a more noble thought upon mine honour
Than for to think that I would sink it here.

KING.

Sir, for my thoughts, you have them ill to friend [2]
Till your deeds gain them: fairer prove your honour
Than in my thought it lies!

DIANA.

Good my lord,
Ask him upon his oath, if he does think
He had not my virginity.

KING.

What say'st thou to her?

BERTRAM.

She's impudent, my lord,
And was a common gamester to the camp.[3]

DIANA.

He does me wrong, my lord; if I were so,
He might have bought me at a common price:
Do not believe him: O, behold this ring,
Whose high respect[4] and rich validity[5]
Did lack a parallel; yet, for all that,
He gave it to a commoner o'the camp,
If I be one.

COUNTESS.

He blushes, and 'tis his:
Of six preceding ancestors, that gem,
Conferr'd by testament[6] to the sequent issue,[7]
Hath it been owed [8] and worn. This is his wife;
That ring's a thousand proofs.

---

[1] **fond:** foolish. [2] **you have . . . friend:** they are unfriendly toward you. [3] **gamester to the camp:** camp follower. [4] **respect:** valuation. [5] **validity:** value. [6] **testament:** will. [7] **sequent issue:** succeeding heir. [8] **owed:** owned.

KING.

Methought you said
You saw one here in court could witness it.

DIANA.

I did, my lord, but loth am to produce
So bad an instrument:[1] his name's Parolles.

LAFEU.

I saw the man to-day, if man he be.

KING.

Find him, and bring him hither.

[*Exit an* ATTENDANT.

BERTRAM.

What of him?
He's quoted for[2] a most perfidious slave,
With all the spots[3] o'the world taxt and debosht;[4]
Whose nature sickens but to speak a truth.
Am I or that or this for what he'll utter,[5]
That will speak any thing?

KING.

She hath that ring of yours.

BERTRAM.

I think she has: certain it is I liked her,
And boarded [6] her i'the wanton way of youth:
She knew her distance, and did angle for me,
Madding[7] my eagerness with her restraint,
As all impediments in fancy's[8] course
Are motives of more fancy; and, in fine,[9]
Her infinite coming, with her modern[10] grace,
Subdued me to her rate:[11] she got the ring;
And I had that which any inferior might
At market-price have bought.

DIANA.

I must be patient:

---

[1] **instrument:** agent. [2] **quoted for:** reputed to be. [3] **spots:** sins. [4] **taxt and debosht:** censured as a debaucher. [5] **Am I . . . utter:** am I to be judged by anything he says. [6] **boarded:** approached. [7] **Madding:** maddening. [8] **fancy's:** love's. [9] **in fine:** finally. [10] **modern:** youthful. [11] **rate:** price.

You, that turn'd off a first so noble wife,
May justly diet me.[1] I pray you yet,—
Since you lack virtue, I will lose a husband,—
Send for your ring, I will return it home,
And give me mine again.

BERTRAM.

I have it not.

KING.

What ring was yours, I pray you?

DIANA.

Sir, much like
The same upon your finger.

KING.

Know you this ring? this ring was his of late.

DIANA.

And this was it I gave him, being a-bed.

KING.

The story, then, goes false, you threw it him
Out of a casement.

DIANA.

I have spoke the truth.

BERTRAM.

My lord, I do confess the ring was hers.

KING.

You boggle shrewdly,[2] every feather starts[3] you.—

Enter PAROLLES, *with* ATTENDANT.

Is this the man you speak of?

DIANA.

Ay, my lord.

KING.

Tell me, sirrah,—but tell me true, I charge you,
Not fearing the displeasure of your master,

---

[1] **diet me**: deprive me of my due.
[2] **boggle shrewdly**: start (shy) sharply.
[3] **starts**: startles.

Which, on your just proceeding,[1] I'll keep off,—
By[2] him and by this woman here what know you?

PAROLLES.

So please your majesty, my master hath been an honourable gentleman: tricks he hath had in him, which gentlemen have.

KING.

Come, come, to the purpose: did he love this woman?

PAROLLES.

Faith, sir, he did love her; but how?

KING.

How, I pray you?

PAROLLES.

He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves a woman.

KING.

How is that?

PAROLLES.

He loved her, sir, and loved her not.

KING.

As thou art a knave, and no knave.—What an equivocal companion[3] is this!

PAROLLES.

I am a poor man, and at your majesty's command.

LAFEU.

He's a good drum,[4] my lord, but a naughty[5] orator.

DIANA.

Do you know he promised me marriage?

PAROLLES.

Faith, I know more than I'll speak.

---

[1] **on your just proceeding:** if you proceed honestly.
[2] **By:** concerning.
[3] **companion:** fellow.
[4] **drum:** drummer.
[5] **naughty:** good-for-nothing.

KING.

But wilt thou not speak all thou know'st?

PAROLLES.

Yes, so please your majesty. I did go between them,[1] as I said; but more than that, he loved her,—for, indeed, he was mad for her, and talkt of Satan, and of Limbo, and of Furies, and I know not what: yet I was in that credit with them at that time, that I knew of their going to bed; and of other motions,[2] as promising her marriage, and things which would derive me ill will to speak of; therefore I will not speak what I know.

KING.

Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst say they are married; but thou art too fine[3] in thy evidence; therefore stand aside.—

This ring, you say, was yours?

DIANA.

Ay, my good lord.

KING.

Where did you buy it? or who gave it you?

DIANA.

It was not given me, nor I did not buy it.

KING.

Who lent it you?

DIANA.

It was not lent me neither.

KING.

Where did you find it, then?

DIANA.

I found it not.

KING.

If it were yours by none of all these ways,
How could you give it him?

---

[1] **go between them:** act as their go-between.
[2] **motions:** proposals; actions.
[3] **fine:** artful.

DIANA.

I never gave it him.

LAFEU.

This woman's an easy glove, my lord; she goes off and on at pleasure.

KING.

This ring was mine; I gave it his first wife.

DIANA.

It might be yours or hers, for aught I know.

KING.

Take her away; I do not like her now;
To prison with her: and away with him.—
Unless thou tell'st me where thou hadst this ring,
Thou diest within this hour.

DIANA.

I'll never tell you.

KING.

Take her away.

DIANA.

I'll put in[1] bail, my liege.

KING.

I think thee now some common customer.[2]

DIANA.

By Jove, if ever I knew man, 'twas you.

KING.

Wherefore[3] hast thou accused him all this while?

DIANA.

Because he's guilty, and he is not guilty:
He knows I am no maid, and he'll swear to't;
I'll swear I am a maid, and he knows not:
Great king, I am no strumpet, by my life;
I'm either maid, or else this old man's wife.

[*Pointing to* LAFEU.

---

[1] **put in:** put up.
[2] **customer:** prostitute.
[3] **Wherefore:** why.

KING.

She does abuse our ears: to prison with her.

DIANA.

Good mother, fetch my bail.—Stay, royal sir: [*Exit* WIDOW.
The jeweller that owes[1] the ring is sent for,
And he shall surety[2] me. But for this lord,
Who hath abused me, as he knows himself,
Though yet he never harm'd me, here I quit[3] him:
He knows himself my bed he hath defiled;
And at that time he got his wife with child:
Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick:
So there's my riddle,—One that's dead is quick:[4]
And now behold the meaning.

Enter WIDOW, *with* HELENA.

KING.

Is there no exorcist[5]
Beguiles[6] the truer office of mine eyes?
Is't real that I see?

HELENA.

No, my good lord;
'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see,
The name, and not the thing.

BERTRAM.

Both, both:—O, pardon!

HELENA.

O my good lord, when I was like this maid,
I found you wondrous kind. There is your ring;
And, look you, here's your letter; this it says:
'When from my finger you can get this ring,
And are by me with child, &c.' This is done:
Will you be mine, now you are doubly won?

---

[1] **owes:** owns.
[2] **surety:** vouch for.
[3] **quit:** acquit.
[4] **quick:** alive.
[5] **exorcist:** one who raises spirits.
[6] **Beguiles:** deceives.

BERTRAM.

If, she, my liege, can make me know this clearly,
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.

HELENA.

If it appear not plain, and prove untrue,
Deadly divorce step between me and you!—
O my dear mother, do I see you living?

LAFEU.

Mine eyes smell onions; I shall weep anon:—
[*to* PAROLLES] Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkercher: so, I thank thee: wait on me home, I'll make sport with thee: let thy courtesies alone, they are scurvy ones.

KING.

Let us from point to point this story know,
To make the even[1] truth in pleasure flow.—
[*to* DIANA] If thou be'st yet a fresh uncropped flower,
Choose thou thy husband, and I'll pay thy dower;[2]
For I can guess that, by thy honest aid,
Thou kept'st a wife herself, thyself a maid.—
Of that, and all the progress, more and less,
Resolvedly more leisure shall express:[3]
All yet seems well; and if it end so meet,[4]
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet. [*Flourish.*

---

[1] **even:** full.
[2] **dower:** dowry.
[3] **leisure shall express:** time will tell.
[4] **meet:** fittingly.

EPILOGUE

Spoken by the KING.

The king's a beggar,[1] now the play is done:
All is well ended, if this suit be won,
That you express content; which we will pay,
With strife to please you, day exceeding day:
Ours be your patience then, and yours our parts;
Your gentle hands[2] lend us, and take our hearts.[3] [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **The king's a beggar:** an allusion to "The King and the Beggar" (Percy's *Reliques*).
[2] **gentle hands:** applause.
[3] **our hearts:** our thanks.

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